FARMER

OF

INGLEWOOD FOREST.

A NOVEL.

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THE

FARMER

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INGLEWOOD FOREST.

A Novel.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY

ELIZABETH HELME,

AUTHOR OF

LOUISA, OR THE COTTAGE ON THE MOOR; DUNCAN AND PEGGY, ST CLAIR OF THE ISLES, PENITENT OF GODSTOW; MODERN TIMES, PILGRIM OF THE CROSS; ALBERT OF STRATHNAVERN, &c. &c.

"We do not always find visible happiness in proportion to visible virtue natural, and almost all political, evils, are incident alike to the bad and good All that virtue can afford is quietness of conscience, and a steady prospect of a happier state."

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THE

FARMER

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INGLEWOOD FOREST.

CHAPTER I.

UNDER an aged oak, that grew on a pleasant but lonely part of Inglewood Forest, one fine summer's evening, sat the venerable farmer Godwin, reading to his family, with a dignity that might have graced a more distinguished rank; but it was a subject that ever raised his heart to the Most High, and made him feel that, however humble the state of

probation, a life spent in innocence and integrity would one day entitle him to a place where virtue alone claims pre-eminence.

On his knee lay the Bible; on his right hand sat his wife, who, though grey hairs shaded her temples, the beam of youthful affection was not extinguished in her eye; on his left sat his sons, William and Edwin; and at her mother's feet was placed their sister Emma, trimming a straw hat with pink ribbons for the ensuing fair.

The lecture concluded, they adjourned to their humble mansion, which, though appertaining to some rich and highly-cultivated land, was nothing more than a spacious, convenient farmhouse; yet to those to whom cleanliness and comfort constitute luxury, this dwelling possessed every attribute. The frugal meal was soon prepared, and seasoned

soned with innocent mirth, and the happy cheerfulness of hearts unconscious of guile might have outbalanced in pleasure far more sumptuous entertainments; for labour had given health, and health appetite; and for the corroding passions of envy, jealousy, pride, or malice, that so frequently embitter the feasts of the great, their hearts were too humble to entertain such overbearing intruders.

The supper removed, and the farmer's pipe, with a pitcher of ale, being placed on the table—"I wonder," said William, with a half-sigh, "whether Fanny Bernard is yet returned home?"

"Suppose we step down the lane and inquire?" replied Edwin; "it is a fine night, and Emma can go with us; we shall be back before my father has smoked his pipe."

This motion was immediately adopted, as farmer Bernard's was only about a

quarter of a mile down a green lane, that was separated from the Forest by the high-road crossing its entrance.

It would hardly be possible to paint three more interesting figures than the brothers and sister tripping by the clear moonlight over the green. William had just attained his twenty-second year, his face and person forming a model from which a statuary might have envied to copy an Apollo, yet with a cast of reflection over his animated features, which to a common observer made them less striking than those of his brother Edwin, who was a year younger, and whose person, though less elegantly formed, was yet more fascinating, from the continual sprightliness that enlivened his features; Emma, innocent as the dove, playful as the lamb, and fair as Milton's Eve, holding of each a hand, and chatting a hundred little *minutias*, to themselves only interesting. On reaching Bernard's

Bernard's farm, they entered without ceremony, the lifting of the latch alone announcing visitors. "Welcome, my lads," said the old man; "what, and my little girl too! are you there? Hark ye, Agnes," addressing his daughter, "replenish the pitcher, and look what hast got in the cupboard."

"We have supped," replied William; and looking anxiously round the room, "Fanny, I see, is not yet returned."

"No; Agnes and I have been wishing for her—she will be back in a day or two, I suppose; but, pies on't! I wondered what brought you here to-night—now the murder's out; however, sorrow's dry; here's to you, my boys, and may Fanny and Agnes make as good wives as their mother! Why, Agnes, I say, there's no ale in the pitcher; pr'ythee draw some, and court afterwards. I think Edwin and you can't have much to whisper, for you had a plaguy long gossip to-day,

 when

when you carried the meat to the reapers."

"Lord, father, you are so odd!" answered Agnes, blushing; "indeed the basket was very heavy, and Edwin carried it for me, for I was quite tired."

"Yes, yes," replied the old man, "I suppose so, for when I came up, you were sitting on the stile to rest. Never blush, girl—many a time thy mother has detained me, Heaven rest her! and thou art but a chip of the old block." Agnes broke off the discourse by hastening to draw the ale; during her absence—"Indeed," said Emma, "as Fanny and Agnes are to be my sisters, I think the sooner the better. Why, Fanny's almost nineteen, and Agnes is two months older than me, and I was seventeen last Midsummer."

"I care not how soon," replied Bernard; "but where shall we find a husband for thee, Emma? Why, William," shaking him heartily by the hand, "what art

art dull for, man? I dare be sworn Fanny is as anxious to see thee as thou be'st to see her—so drink about."

The old clock, which stood in the corner of the kitchen, and on whose tall case were depicted the loves of Henry the Second, together with the death of Fair Rosamond, at that moment striking ten, the visitors rose to depart, Agnes accompanying them to the gate.—"Good night," said William, shaking hands with her.—"Good-night," repeated Emma, saluting her—"and Heaven bless thee!" concluded Edwin, kissing her ruby lips. "I shall see you before breakfast, as I go a-field." Such was the behaviour of these uncorrupted children of innocence, who acted as their pure minds dictated, being strangers to the refinement with which art and good-breeding conceal the emotions of the heart. They had just reached the end of the lane, when several voices struck them from the high-road:

fear they were strangers to—it could only, they thought, be people returning from the market-town to a village about three miles farther; or it might be, as William's heart prompted, Fanny under the care of a party of friends. With such ideas they advanced; but instead of countrymen riding cheerfully homewards, they found two domestics and a postboy endeavouring to raise a chaise that had been overturned, and whose owners, a gentleman and lady, sat by the roadside; the first in great pain, from a broken arm he had received in the fall; and the latter heavily lamenting the accident.

"Thank Heaven, it is not Fanny!" said William, with a sigh.

"But it is people in distress," replied Edwin, quickening his pace; "what can we do for them?"

"Assist them to the utmost of our abilities," returned William, in a tone

yet

yet more animated than his brother's, at the same time hastening forward to execute his purpose.

On their reaching the chaise they found one of the wheels broken, so that to proceed was impossible; therefore, while William and Emma were aiding the strangers, Edwin ran home to inform his father of the accident, and to entreat him, as there was no house of entertainment within four miles, to offer the stranger with the broken arm their spare bed, till he could be moved farther with safety.

The virtues that warmed the heart of farmer Godwin would have dignified the bosom of a prince; from his humble roof the wanderer ever departed satisfied, wishing that his means were as extensive as the charity of his heart. Edwin's request was therefore instantly granted, the good man himself accompanying his

son to make the offer, while his dame, as he frequently called her, with the assistance of her maid Margery, prepared the spare bed, in case the stranger should accept her husband's offer.

On Godwin's reaching the spot where the disaster happened, he immediately went up to the sufferer, whose arm was now supported by the trembling Emma, William and the rest being still employed about the chaise, at the entreaty of the owner, who anxiously wished to proceed.—"My good sir," said Godwin, "in your situation the distance to the village is too far; therefore, if you will accept the offer of an apartment in a farmhouse, where we will endeavour to render you all the service in our power, we will lead you there instantly, while one of my sons shall ride to the next market-town for a surgeon. The lady we can also accommodate; and for your domestics, after some refreshment,

freshment, those you have no service for can proceed to get your carriage repaired, which in the meantime will be perfectly safe here."

The stranger immediately accepted the farmer's offer; for which the lady also expressed her thanks, and they proceeded towards Godwin's dwelling; the lady, who had not yet recovered her fright, leaning on Edwin's arm, and the gentleman assisted by Godwin and his son William.

On their reaching the farm, their arrival was announced by the furious barking of the great dog, whose noise was, however, soon silenced by the musical voice of Emma, and the more commanding tone of his master.

The stranger being immediately put to bed, and Edwin dispatched on horseback for the nearest surgeon, the lady

began to recover her fright, Mrs. Godwin having prevailed on her to take a glass of currant wine, and conducted her to a parlour, which, though its furniture was as simple as the minds of its owners, yet also, like them, possessed that real utility that strongly contrasted the folly of gaudy grandeur, which, while it bewitches the eye, is deficient in that general comfort which unadorned convenience ever bestows. Here was no fear of soiling the costly colours of the Persian carpet, though the white scoured floor far more plainly shewed the mark of dirty footsteps; no gilding to be injured by the touch, the chairs, tables, and even glass-frame, being of walnut-tree, which vied with the mirror in brightness. No pictures graced the walls; but, in their stead, numberless odoriferous bouquets, in white earthen jars, placed on shelves round the apartment; and to complete the whole, the glittering steel stove, with brass knobs, filled with

with large branches of the hawthorn and wild briar in blossom. Wearied with travelling and the subsequent fright, Mrs. Delmer (for so was the lady called) looked round, with a complacency and satisfaction which splendid drawing-rooms had not always been able to inspire.—"It is fairy land," thought she, "and the ideas of my fifteenth year are realized in the inhabitants of this mansion."

Mrs. Delmer was a widow, about the age of twenty-eight, and possessed of a large independency, by the death of a husband she hated. She was now hastening to the capital with her brother, in order to enjoy those pleasures she had been debarred during the last ten years; the greatest part of which time she had been confined to the country by her spouse, whose greatest pleasure had consisted in hunting and drinking. On her first entrance into public life, her fine person

person had procured her the affluence she enjoyed; and she had now no doubt it would secure her a husband, calculated to make her happy, and repay her for the disgust she had entertained for his predecessor. Wealth had been her first incentive; but she had found its inefficacy of giving happiness, and therefore determined to make love alone the motive of a second union. Her brother, Mr. Whitmore, was about twenty-six, and had been some time married, but experienced little happiness in that state, having, like his sister, consulted convenience more than affection, or even esteem, in the disposal of his hand. His lady was young, handsome, lively, and too fashionably educated not to return the coldness with which he treated her; and as all the gay world admired her, thought the affection of a husband a mite in the great scale, and easily dispensed with. Her fortune being large, her settlement was also liberal, and sufficiently

ciently enabled her to pursue her inclinations without control; for Mr. Whitmore was too well bred to interfere with her pleasures, while she was polite enough to be blind to his. Ever engaged in different pursuits, they seldom met above once or twice a-week at dinner, and then usually surrounded with company; a matrimonial *tête-à-tête* was by both declared the most wearisome thing in the universe. Mr. Whitmore had been on a visit to his sister, who had passed the first six months of her widowhood at her country-seat in Cumberland; and was returning with her to his own villa near London (where he had left his lady) when the accident happened. Whitmore was only son to a banker, who at his death had left him, what he thought, a sufficiency to decline business. In his person he was handsome and graceful; in his disposition generous and brave; but born to affluence, and accustomed from his childhood to command his

his wishes without control, his passions knew no curb, his inclinations no law but gratification: highly-accomplished and insinuating in his address, he had been uncommonly successful in his amours, addressing indiscriminately both married and single that chanced to please him, or where he could flatter himself with success; frequently declaring that both sexes were free agents, and those only fulfilled the end of their creation who made the most of life, and enjoyed it to the utmost of their power, so they injured no man's purse or property—women, in his opinion, not coming under that denomination, being a kind of fair game, and their persons transferrable, as their affections, to him that pleased them most.

Such were the new inmates at Godwin Farm, where every individual was busy in preparing for their ease and convenience until the return of Edwin with a surgeon, who having set Mr. Whitmore's

Whitmore's arm, and assured them there was not the least danger, being only a simple fracture, the females retired to take a short repose, William and Edwin to their morning occupations, day being already broke, and the venerable Godwin to watch by the side of Whitmore.

CHAP.

CHAPTER II.

WHITMORE, after a slight repose, which was disturbed by the pain he experienced from his arm, entered into conversation with his host, expressing his thanks in the warmest terms; which subject, however, being only distressing to the farmer, who thought he had done nothing more than what, in the same circumstances, almost every man would have done for him, he changed the discourse, and began to inquire about the vicinity.

"The parish-church," said Godwin, "is not more than two miles off, and almost close to it is a good house and extensive grounds, belonging to the lady who inherits great part of the land around. As yet she is a perfect stranger to us, having always lived with an uncle near

near the capital, who has left her heiress to his whole estate. The nearest market town is about four miles from hence, so that I regard the chance that threw my sons in your way as fortunate, for such a distance in your situation must have been dreadful."

Whitmore now again attempted to repeat his thanks.—" My good sir," interrupted the farmer, " you see so trifling a service in too strong a light. In such a misfortune would not you have acted the same by me?"

" Indeed I would," answered Whitmore, after a momentary pause, and then remained silent. To confess the truth, though he had answered Godwin's question in the affirmative, yet there was a monitor within his own breast, which, by knowing mankind better, was not so easily satisfied; he therefore said no more, but remaining quiet, could not avoid repeating to his own heart the

question

question of the farmer—"Would you not have done the same by me?"—"I should, perhaps," replied he mentally, "have left him in charge with my footman, and ordered him a surgeon; or if the accident had happened in town, given him a guinea, had he wanted it, and sent him to the hospital; but to make him a bed in my own house, nay, to wait by his side, while all my family were employed in his service, I should never have done it." This idea gave transitory awkwardness to the feelings of Whitmore; but the pride of birth, and the complacency which superior wealth usually bestows on its possessors, soon dispersed the cloud, when they presented to his mind the difference of situation in life from that of Godwin's—the one a simple farmer, the other possessed of three thousand a-year, a place in the senate, and universally courted and admired. This considered, there was no comparison in the case; for though he felt that

that the bones of a gentleman were as brittle as those of a peasant, and that he was as vulnerable to pain, yet he could not divest himself of the idea, that superior rank and fortune demanded particular cares, even from those persons whom he would have blushed to attend in the same situation. Mr. Whitmore's valet now entered; he had been employed in moving the baggage out of the chaise, which was refitted in such a manner as to be removed to the next town to be thoroughly repaired. Godwin, thus relieved, adjourned to his kitchen, where he found his wife, Emma, and the maid assembled, all inquiring how the stranger had rested.

Mrs. Godwin then ordered Margery to pick out the best baked cakes, while herself made the tea; and pouring out two breakfast-cups, sent one to Mrs. Delmer, who was not yet risen, and took the other herself to Whitmore, entreat-

ing

ing him to make free, and command whatever their house afforded, with that characteristic goodness of heart which peculiarly distinguished her, and that had made her doubly amiable in youth, and respectable in age.

Whitmore, after a proper return to her civility, said—"May I not be permitted some time to-day, my dear madam, to see and thank my young friends for the services of last night?"

Mrs. Godwin assured him her sons would not fail to wait on him on their return from their morning avocation: then, wishing him speedily better, she returned to breakfast, where the party was soon augmented by William and Edwin, who, after a hasty meal, retired to pay their compliments to Whitmore, while Emma repaired to Mrs. Delmer, whom she assisted to dress.

Mrs. Delmer, in her manner, possessed much of her brother's affability, and by her good-humour gained an almost immediate interest in the heart of Emma, who declared, when she afterwards joined her brothers, that she had never before seen so beautiful and engaging a woman. To this, however, both brothers dissented; the elder declaring she was not near so handsome as Fanny Bernard; and the younger, that was Agnes dressed the same, there would be no comparison between them.

"As to dress," returned William, "Fanny is always so exact and neat, that any alteration must be for the worse; and I protest I should think her fine hair disfigured by powder and grease—then that hateful hat, with a great cockade and feather, gives an air of harshness and boldness, which I cannot endure; Fanny's straw bonnet, with the blue ribbon, is a thousand times more becoming."

"No

"No such thing, William," replied Emma, "for I tried it on, and looked quite a different creature; the feathers made me so tall, and look so well, that I am sure I never liked myself so much before. Then her shoes—why I thought her feet were as little again as mine, yet it was only their make and the smart heels, for they are larger; but the shoemakers about here are so awkward, that they make one's feet quite clumsy! I declare I shall now have no patience with them."

"Yet your mother," said William, gravely, "who was reckoned one of the finest girls in the whole country, was always satisfied with them."

"All that is very true," interrupted Edwin, "yet you cannot persuade me but Mr. Whitmore's clothes are more becoming than ours, even though we saw him under such a disadvantage as his accident must occasion; and though I am perfectly satisfied with my situation in

in life, yet was fortune, by any unforeseen event, to favour me, I should certainly think it no error to adopt my dress to the fashion."

"Certainly not," replied Emma; "but William is so grave, that I am sure, had my grandfather (the rector) lived, he might have made him a parson; nay, you know, my father says he is the very image of him."

"I accept your compliment," answered William, with a smile; "for surely it is one to be told I resemble a man who was a blessing to his neighbours, and an honour to his profession; and in return, Emma, I wish thy temper may resemble thy mother's as much as thy person."

"Thank you, my dear William," giving him an affectionate kiss on the cheek; "but, indeed, I fear I shall never be so handsome."

"I rather fear you will never be so unconscious of it," replied William;

"for, as to beauty, you have as great a share as I think you can be safely trusted with."

"Oh! how ill-natured!" exclaimed Emma; "I protest you grow worse and worse; I will stay no longer—I promised to walk with Mrs. Delmer, and must go this instant." With these words, away flew the sprightly girl to perform her promise; while her brothers returned to their usual occupation in the field, overlooking and occasionally assisting the labourers: calling, however, at Bernard's, where William had the vexation to learn that Fanny had written to inform her father that she should for some time prolong her stay, as her aunt, whom she was visiting, still continued ill, and entreated her presence; concluding with a modest but tender remembrance to her lover.

William perused the letter with a sigh; and informing the farmer of the particulars

particulars of the last night's adventure, the brothers soon after took their leave.

Emma had joined Mrs. Delmer, who, however, previous to her walk, called at her brother's apartment, where she had passed the morning; and finding him perfectly cheerful, and without fever, easily acquiesced in his desire of not sending for more assistance, which she had at first strongly pressed. In this visit she was accompanied by Emma, who Whitmore, in spite of his pain the night before, had thought the most lovely creature he ever beheld, and who now, divested of the pallid hue and tremor occasioned by his accident, appeared a thousand times more charming.

"My dear brother," said Mrs. Delmer, "as you seem tolerably easy, and I do but disturb you, my young friend and myself are going to take a walk."

 "Indeed,"

"Indeed," replied Whitmore, "though I prefer your recreation before my own, yet, in this case, I must truly confess I should be more easy, and less disturbed, by your company, than left to my own thoughts. However, I wish you a pleasant walk, and regret that I cannot accompany you; yet before you go, give me leave to thank Miss Godwin for the trouble I gave her last night, in supporting my arm—a trouble," continued he, with great softness, "that made even such a situation enviable."

"Indeed, sir," answered Emma, "I trembled so much, that I could not hold it as steadily as William desired me; and, though you did not complain, I am sure I must hurt you."

"Good Heaven! hurt me! Such support could alone enable me to bear the pain with becoming patience; but I detain you; yet, might I entreat a favour, it should be for half an hour of your company on your return. Charity, my dear

dear sister, you know, is strongly recommended to us; and can you shew yours more effectually than on such a miserable invalid?"

"Well, we will endeavour to exert it;" replied Mrs. Delmer; "but for the present, adieu."

Emma then conducted Mrs. Delmer, at her own desire, to their harvest-field, where the first objects that presented were William and Edwin, divested of their coats, in shirts white as snow, foremost amongst the reapers. William respectfully moving his hat, continued his labour; but Edwin, a deep blush covering his face, to be thus caught, hastily put on his coat, and joined Mrs. Delmer and Emma.

"What a delightful scene!" said the lady, before he reached them. "I know not how it happens, my dear girl, but in one day you have almost delighted

me with rural life, which I ever before held in abhorrence; but the reason is obvious—your family are so totally different from all I ever saw who reside constantly in the country, that the contrast became doubly striking."

"If there is any difference," replied Emma, "we derive it from my father, who has had a very good education, being son to the rector of the parish, who, however, as my father declined pursuing his fortune in the church, had it only in his power to settle him on this farm, purchasing the house, and about fourteen acres of the adjoining land. The remainder we hold on lease for a long term, and at an easy rent."

Edwin at that moment joined them, and was received by Mrs. Delmer with a smile. After some cheerful conversation, she walked up to the reapers, and gave them a guinea to drink. Then turning to Edwin, she said—"We should

should intrude too much on your time to ask your company home; but we shall see you in the evening in my brother's apartment, who has made us promise to pass an hour with him." Edwin bowed; and Mrs. Delmer and Emma bidding him farewell, returned home.

In this manner passed the first day, and several succeeding ones, until Whitmore's arm began to unite, and he was able to sit up. The pillow which supported the fracture would indeed be frequently uneasy, and seldom could be rendered otherwise, but by Emma, who, he affirmed, ever placed it smoother than any one else, thanking her, with a glance from his expressive dark eyes, in a language which, though new, was soon intelligible to her unexperienced heart. Twice, as she placed his arm, he had ventured to kiss her hand; but the confusion this had occasioned, and the tremor with which she afterwards

 approached

approached him, determined him to desist, rather than give an alarm that might prove detrimental to his passion.

CHAPTER III.

WHITMORE gained strength daily; and at length, with his arm in a sling, came down stairs, though the surgeon affirmed he must not yet venture the shaking of a carriage. On the second day after he had left his chamber, finding himself alone with Godwin, after some conversation, in which he expressed his warmest thanks for the favours he had received, he took his hand, and with the natural ease of good breeding that particularly distinguished him, entreated his acceptance of a bank-note of a hundred pounds, as a small retribution towards the obligations he had received.

"My

" My good sir," said the farmer, returning the note, " you are heartily welcome to the asylum your unhappy situation rendered necessary. To me it has been no inconvenience, but rather a gratification, as it has enabled me to fulfil one of the greatest duties commanded us—' Do unto others as you would they should do unto you.' Your own servant has taken the fatigue on himself, and shall you then pay for your mere shelter and a little food in such a calamity? Heaven forbid! If any debt, not to me is it due, but to those in similar circumstances, and to whom, I doubt not, your own heart will lead you to pay it."

Whitmore was abashed; he felt all the dignity and force of virtue: he remembered Emma, and his heart smote him; but recovering his confusion, and reflecting for a few moments, he replied— " My dear sir, at least give me some way

to shew my gratitude. You have two sons—informed, sensible young men: permit me to take on myself the charge of one of them. From my situation in life, I flatter myself I can introduce him to the world with success, having it in my power to place a person immediately as clerk in one of the public offices; which situation, till we can procure a better, will at least afford a genteel competency."

Godwin returned his thanks for this offer, answering, that in a matter in which themselves were so materially concerned, he would certainly inform them of Mr. Whitmore's generosity.—"But for my own part," continued he, "were I to consult only my wishes, I should rather they would settle in the spot where they first saw the light. Great towns, I have heard and read, are full of danger; and though I depend much on the virtuous education I have given my sons,

yet

yet I should tremble to expose them to temptations which youth and constitution could ill withstand."

The entrance of Mrs. Godwin with her sons here broke off the discourse, which, however, was soon renewed by the farmer's informing them of what had passed. The anxious mother, trembling with dread at the bare idea of being separated from her children, was, at the same moment, elated with their probable success, and their future elevation in life; she therefore remained silent, tears glistening in her eyes, which, fixed on the loved companion of her youth, appeared to wish to read his sentiments on the occasion; but he simply repeated Mr. Whitmore's offer, without expressing, even in the most distant manner, his own thoughts on the occasion. He had hardly concluded, when William, addressing Mr. Whitmore, replied—"I know no terms, sir, in the plain untutored lan-

guage I have been accustomed to, that appear strong enough to express my thanks for your generosity; but for myself, must beg leave to decline it. My father's increasing years demand the assistance of a son, both as a comfort to his age, and to take from his hand the weight of business, trivial to youth, but fatiguing in advanced life. I am also affianced to a young woman, who, like myself, would, I am sure, prefer this cottage, labour, content, and peace, to all the bustle that grandeur or wealth could bestow; and, lastly, unfit, from disposition, for public life, I can but again express my thanks for your kindness, of which I shall ever retain the most grateful remembrance." Here William ceased. His father smiled satisfaction, which sentiment was as instantly conveyed to the features of his mother, whose heart, however, still hung doubtful of the answer of her younger son.

Edwin

Edwin was silent, and appeared lost in thought: the struggle was hard, and, for some moments, forbade utterance. Greatness and wealth for the first time appeared within his grasp; but then to leave Agnes, though even for a short time, was distraction; yet, perhaps, soon to return, and bear her in triumph to scenes she was fitted to adorn, was enchanting, and, after a moment's pause, mastered the first consideration.

"I will be guided by my father, sir," at length hesitated Edwin: "he is the best judge of what is fitting for my welfare; and whatever is his determination, I shall submit to without repugnance."

"My dear boy," replied Godwin, "by the agreement with Bernard, yourself and your brother will equally share what we possess, except the trifle I have saved being transferred at your mother's death to Emma. You must therefore, in the present

sent case, judge for yourself, and answer accordingly."

Edwin again, after a pause, replied, that as he knew his father would not feel his loss, from the attention of William, with his permission he would think of it till the morrow, and then give a definitive answer. Whitmore approved of this resolution, as did also Godwin; and being soon after joined by Mrs. Delmer and Emma, the conversation ceased; William and his brother quitting them to go to farmer Bernard's.

In their way thither, William remained silent until Edwin reassumed the discourse respecting Mr. Whitmore's offer, which he spoke of with all the warmth and energy natural to youth.—"I am young," said he, "and perhaps may be successful enough to acquire sufficient wealth to fix my Agnes in a state equal to

to my wishes—to assist my parents and Emma—and place my beloved brother above labour.—What happiness!"

"I can know no greater," returned William, calmly, though with great affection, "than the prospect before me appears to promise. I am young, and able to labour; Fanny Bernard will be my companion, and share with me the pleasing employ of soothing the declining years of our parents. With such a wife, and such relations, what can I wish for more? The farm has ever been sufficient to gratify all our wants and wishes; what then should we seek for, my dear brother? Under the specious covering of wealth and grandeur, frequently lurks care; and though I would not advise, yet I must confess I had hoped, that as our youth had passed together, our age might do the same. Virtue, justice, and all the claims that distinguish manhood, unite you to Agnes, whom, if you forsake,

sake, fascinated by the delirium of grandeur, you are unworthy to live."

"Forsake Agnes!" replied Edwin, recoiling with horror at the idea; "abandon Agnes! No, William, do not think so ill of me: with her I would rather encounter all the calamities that Fortune could inflict, than accept a throne without her!"

This discourse brought them to Bernard's door, where they were met by Agnes.—"What is the matter, Edwin?" said she, fixing her eyes on him with inquiring tenderness; "you look unhappy! —nay, and William too! Tell me, are all well at home?"

William replied in the affirmative; then asking for her father, hastily passed into the house, leaving her alone with Edwin.

"Agnes," said Edwin, hesitating, "will

"will you walk with me into the orchard? I have much to consult you upon."

Agnes gave him her hand in silence, which he felt tremble within his own. "Why this alarm, my love?" said he, putting his arm round her waist. "What do you fear?

"Alas! I know not what," replied she; "but your features first gave me a shock that I cannot account for, and which was increased by William's looks and behaviour. Well do I know his temper, Edwin: he is never moved by trifles—something very material must have happened to change him thus."

"Nothing material, my love, only Mr. Whitmore has been offering my father to take charge of either my brother or myself, and to settle us in some situation that may lead us to make our fortune. William first replied, and——"

"Declined it!" scarcely articulated Agnes.

"Yes,

"Yes, my dear girl; nor have I accepted it. I wished to consult you, and shall abide by your determination. If you approve, and think it may be the means of our future welfare, by placing me above sharing our parent's property with William, I shall accept it with pleasure; if otherwise, relinquish it: for you well know, my Agnes," continued he, kissing off a tear that had fallen on her cheek, "that my greatest happiness consists in giving you pleasure. In a few months, perhaps, I might be settled to my satisfaction, and able to return to Inglewood, and fetch my betrothed wife. Would to Heaven you had already borne that name! for as it is, I fear, both our parents will object to our union until they find how I am placed. Oh, Agnes, they say we are too young to marry! How false that notion, when we are old enough to love!"

Edwin might have continued for a much

much longer time uninterrupted, for the heart of Agnes was too full for utterance; and, with her face reclined on his shoulder, she gave vent to the anguish that overwhelmed her.

"I will not go then," continued Edwin. "I cannot see you thus. I will, with thanks, decline Mr. Whitmore's offer: yet, Agnes," added he, pressing her to his bosom, "to have placed thee in a state I should glory to view thee in, what would I not endure! Heaven witness, that was my strongest incentive! but it is past—I renounce it; it gives thee pain, Agnes, and I will remain through life in the humble situation to which I was born."

"Not on my account, Edwin," sobbed Agnes, endeavouring to master her tears: "go where your wishes lead you—I have no desire for grandeur; Inglewood, with your company, contained all I ever wished to possess: but go—go to that hate-

ful

ful city, whose vices I have trembled to hear repeated; where men scoff at the ruin of innocent maids, and vile women walk the streets at noonday with unblushing cheeks; where power overcomes right; and where affection is bought and sold! Go there, Edwin, and forsake the rustics of Inglewood: but remember, that bosoms covered with silks and embroidery do not always contain hearts so true as mine."

"Cruel, ungenerous Agnes! what are their hearts to me? Am I not thine? have we not mutually promised? and can you think I will ever falsify that vow, even though we should be separated? No; I repeat it—should I become that villain, may I be abandoned of God and man! may the *wealth* I seek become my bane! *cursed* by my parents, *despised* by my brother; and by thee, Agnes ——"

"*Forgiven!*" interrupted she, laying her hand on his lips.

"No,

"No, Agnes, I would have said hated, but cannot bear the thought! Hated by thee!—impossible! that curse alone would drive me to despair! To-morrow I will decline Mr. Whitmore's offer; smile then, my love, and let it be forgotten."

"Not from my persuasion shall you relinquish it," said Agnes; "for as I am sure your inclination prompts you to accept his proposal, might you not hereafter reflect on yourself for having let an advantage pass that you could never regain? Consult, therefore, with your father and mother, and be sure I will acquiesce in whatever they determine, convinced they are the best judges how you should act." With such discourse Edwin and Agnes passed the time in the first *tête-à-tête* they ever found painful; however, his repeated vows and tenderness, in some measure, contributed to sooth her; and, pulling her bonnet lower over her eyes, they

returned

returned to the farm, where a scene of a very different nature had taken place in their absence.—They were hardly out of sight, and William had just time to have informed Bernard of Mr. Whitmore's offer, which the honest farmer did not seem to disapprove, when the trampling of horses was heard in the lane. William listened a moment—"It is, perhaps, Fanny!" exclaimed he, regardless of what Bernard was saying, and hastening to the gate with the utmost eagerness, his eyes sparkling with joy and expectation, when a moment presented her to his sight, with a young cousin, who had escorted her home. William rushed to meet them; while Fanny, seeing his approach, threw the bridle on the neck of the old mare, and was caught in his arms in an instant, each only articulating the name of the other; the young farmer hallooing his greetings, and the old mare continuing her

her sober pace till she reached the well-known stable-door, apparently as pleased as any of the party.

Bernard by this time was at the gate, where he received his daughter from William; and giving her a kiss, shook his relation heartily by the hand, exclaiming—" By my truth, I am glad ye be come! for, i'faith, I believe, if you had staid a week longer, we should have had a burying. Take care how you fall in love, cousin, for look at William there; he used to be as likely a fellow as you would see on a summer's day," continued he, pointing to him; " why, pies on the fellow, what a change has taken place! a quarter of an hour ago his face was as long as my leg, and his eyes as dead as a stale mackerel's; now, I protest, they look quite bright, and his cheeks plump! Why thou must be a plaguy good doctor, Fanny, to make such a speedy cure!"

" She

"She is the only one I ever intend to employ, if she will undertake the task," replied William: "but *your* cousin must be fatigued, and need refreshment."

"Good troth, you may as well say *my* cousin at once, for that will be the next thing, I suppose; however, come in, my lads; you shall have the best the cupboard and cellar afford." With these words he led the way into the house, where they were soon joined by Edwin and Agnes. "Pies on't!" cried the old man, "here comes another pair of turtles. Heaven help the poor fellow that has likely daughters—sigh here, kiss there; and then my poor apple-trees, what with true lovers' knots, F. B. and A. B. if the girls don't get married soon, they wont be worth a farthing."

William smiled at the farmer's humour; his cousin applauded it with a hearty laugh; but Edwin, distracted between the contending passions of love and

and ambition, hardly knew what passed; while Fanny, ever gentle and observant, caught the gloom that hung on her beloved sister's features, by whom she was seated, her eyes tenderly fixed on her face, and anxiously inquiring after her health.

CHAPTER IV.

WHILE William and Edwin were engaged at Bernard's, Mrs. Delmer, her brother and Emma, had taken their evening walk, during which he had informed them of the wish he entertained of Edwin's accompanying them to town. Mrs. Delmer expressed the highest satisfaction at this intelligence, saying—that she had no doubt but that, with the natural gracefulness of Edwin, his fine person, and a proper introduction,

he would soon make his fortune. Emma also testified her pleasure; though, at the same time, her face was a perfect index of an April day, alternately exhibiting tears and dimpled smiles. "Why these tears, lovely Emma?" said Whitmore: "your brother's preferment and happiness shall be my peculiar care: think you not," added he, in a lower voice, "but he must be dear to me?"

"I am sufficiently convinced of your goodness," replied Emma; "but we have never yet been separated for a day—a circumstance which must plead an excuse for the weakness I now shew. Then Agnes, too, whom he sincerely loves, will be quite overcome by his absence; for though both my father and farmer Bernard object to their marriage for a twelvemonth, on account of their youth, yet they have promised to consent at that time." Emma was too intent on the subject, and Whitmore too intent on Emma, to pay much attention

to

the countenance of Mrs. Delmer, which, on this intelligence, was overspread with a deep crimson; and interrupting Emma —"It is to be hoped," said she, "that the different situation in which he will be placed, will inspire him with ideas more advantageous to his future fortune."

"As to that, madam," replied Emma, "Fanny and Agnes are perfectly worthy the affection of my brothers; for, exclusive of sharing all their father possesses at his death, they are reckoned among the best, as well as handsomest girls in the country."

"Perhaps so," returned Mrs. Delmer, petulantly; "at a country fair, a small stock of beauty will go a great way."

"You will not say so when you see them, but at once allow my brother's affections well placed," replied Emma. "Indeed I don't know how it could be otherwise; they are our nearest neighbours; and their mother dying when they were very young, they have been

as much brought up at our house as their own."

Whitmore here interrupted the discourse by saying—" Should your brother, Miss Emma, accept my offer, which I confess I greatly wish, would not the dread you appear to feel at the idea of parting with him be greatly lessened by returning my sister's visit for a short time in London, where we would endeavour to shew you the kindness we received at Inglewood was not lavished on insensibles?" Emma for a moment made no reply; for though such a project had never entered her thoughts, it was too congenial to her inclinations to suffer her to entirely decline it; and to acquiesce without the consent of her parents was impossible.

" You do not speak, Miss Godwin," said Whitmore. " My dear sister, will you not assist me in persuading your young friend to favour us so greatly?" Mrs. Delmer, who, though she liked

Emma

Emma very well for a country companion, had no intention of carrying the acquaintance farther, yet in a manner thus pressed to make an offer, replied—"As soon as I have fixed on a house, I shall be happy to be favoured with Miss Godwin's company, if her friends will consent."

Mr. Whitmore, who clearly saw that his sister was far more warm in the interest of a handsome young man than of a beautiful woman, replied—"True, my dear madam, we both speak provisionally of what we wish; for Edwin, influenced by his passion, may perhaps decline my offer; and my own heart is too sensible how much such a sacrifice must cost him to press it strenuously, though for his future welfare."

"Ridiculous!" cried Mrs. Delmer; "and to suffer an elegant young man to throw away his life in obscurity, at most the master of a farm!" A blush, partly of anger, but more of shame, dyed the

cheeks of Emma; and, for the first time in her life, she felt it derogatory to be the daughter of a farmer.

" Though I think he might be very happy in that state," said Emma, " yet I cannot but wish he may be sensible of the favour you design him; for though I shall be sincerely grieved at his departure, yet, when I consider it is for his future benefit, that idea will console me, as I hope it will Agnes."

" And to my sister's request you say nothing," replied Whitmore.

" Yes, sir, I am truly sensible of your condescension; and if my parents would permit, should be very happy to accept it for a short time." Mrs. Delmer replied in a manner that fully satisfied the unsuspecting Emma. Whitmore, by a glance, only expressed his thanks; but that glance, more expressive than words, declared unutterable things, and sunk at once into the heart against which it was directed.

On

On their return to the farm, they found Mr. and Mrs. Godwin waiting supper; during which Mr. Whitmore's servant entered with a letter, which he had brought from the market-town. A momentary suffusion crossed his cheek as he received it, and he was on the point of putting it in his pocket, had not Mrs. Delmer said—" From Mrs. Whitmore, I presume, brother?"

" I know not," replied he, after a moment's hesitation, " but will peruse it after supper. My last letters say all our friends in town are well." Mr. Godwin, who had no idea that any one could be so careless about those he denominated his friends, entreated that politeness might not deprive him of the satisfaction of reading his letter. Mr. Whitmore bowed his thanks, but again declined it, when Mrs. Delmer, as if actuated by a spirit of contradiction, seconded Mr. Godwin, by saying—" Do, my dear brother, oblige me; I long to

hear what company you have at Twickenham."—Mr. Whitmore, who now found that opposition would only make the affair worse, and at the same time as effectually disclose what he had wished to conceal, made a virtue of necessity, and breaking the seal, glanced his eyes carelessly over the contents, then reached it to his sister; at that moment heartily wishing her, in his own mind, in the bosom of her departed spouse.

While she was reading, Whitmore fixed his eyes on Emma, and saw, with secret satisfaction, an air of anxiety overspread her countenance; but finding she observed him, immediately withdrew them.

"There, take back your letter," said Mrs. Delmer; "Mrs. Whitmore, I find, is as gay and volatile as ever. This, I think, is the second you have been favoured with since your accident."

"Had

"Had she now," replied Whitmore, peevishly, "saved herself the trouble of reminding me of my misfortunes, I had been infinitely more obliged to her."—With these words he arose, and left the room in evident discomposure, though, at the same time, so apparently overwhelmed with melancholy, that the honest farmer and his wife were deeply concerned for him. Emma, during this discourse, had endeavoured to appear, nay, to persuade herself that she was not interested in it; but her heart beat, her hands trembled, and an involuntary sigh escaped her.

"Bless me!" cried Mrs. Godwin, with much surprise, "I never entertained the most distant idea that Mr. Whitmore was married. I presume his lady was not acquainted with his misfortune till he was almost able to return home."

"Oh yes," replied Mrs. Delmer; "one of the servants who attended us

went off the day following; but she is too gay to be easily alarmed. Indeed I never saw my brother so affected at her indifference before."

"My good dame," replied the farmer, "thinks every one should possess a heart as susceptible as her own. Had I broken my arm, I should have experienced more anxiety for her tenderness than rom the pain, and been in continual apprehension of seeing her sink under the fatigue of attending me."—William and Edwin at that moment entered, and apparently seemed to have changed characters; the first being all gaiety, the latter depressed and lost in thought.

"I think I might venture a good wager," said Mr. Godwin, "that Fanny Bernard is returned: is it not so, William?"

"Yes, sir, she will call to see you in the morning; she would have come to-night, but I prevented her, as she must be fatigued."

"She

"She will be welcome as thyself, my son, and Agnes too; we shall now see her more frequently, as Fanny is returned to share the domestic cares."

Mrs. Delmer changed the discourse, by addressing Edwin respecting his going to town.—"I hope," said she, "you will not give my brother the vexation of refusing his offer, as I am convinced he will exert his utmost interest for your promotion: nay, to his shall be added mine; and as the late Mr. Delmer had powerful friends, I can entertain no doubt of your success."

Edwin bowed his thanks; after which Mrs. Delmer wished them a good night, and retired with Emma.

The farmer thus left alone with his wife and sons, Edwin's affairs were the sole topic. "I can neither persuade you to accept nor decline it, my child," said the good man; "you alone must judge

 what

what you think conducive to your happiness. Equal possessor with your brother, both of my affection and property, there is no need to seek a greater fortune, if you can be content in the state in which Heaven has ever been pleased to keep me, without a desire to change it; but if your wishes lead you to endeavour to gain wealth, make the attempt, and if you fail, my son, return;—under this humble roof you shall find welcome, and a parent's arms open to receive you: yet, my Edwin, if you determine in favour of the turmoils of the great world, beware of the intoxication of pride and pleasure, which inevitably destroy the seeds of virtue; beware of being too suddenly elated, or too soon depressed; the first shews a weak head, the second a pusillanimous heart; seek reputation and honour openly and boldly; but flatter no man's vices or foibles to gain them. Let truth be the invariable guide of all your actions. Give no promise without deliberation;

beration; but when once given, hold it sacred; and finally, remember God, and in the hour of need he will not forget you."

"Oh, my father!" cried Edwin, sinking on his knee;—"but Agnes, my beloved Agnes——"

"Is your betrothed wife—a tie sacred, my son, in the sight of that Power who records all our vows and actions. I have wished to delay your marriage, on account of your youth; but if you determine for a country life, I am willing to retract my opinion, and press Bernard to join your hands at the same time that Fanny and William are united: but if you resolve on a journey to London, such a step would be the height of imprudence, as the care of a young, handsome, and inexperienced female, in a great city, must naturally take up more of your time in your first pursuits than you could prudently spare; in that case, it is my opinion, that you leave her with

her

her father until you are properly settled; for, if you love her, you cannot wish her to partake those difficulties you may necessarily meet on your introduction."

The offer of an immediate union with Agnes, for some moments appeared to preponderate the scale in the mind of Edwin, and determine him in favour of a country life; yet, when reflection presented the resigning almost certain wealth to live for ever in obscurity, nay, to condemn Agnes to such a state when he might raise her to affluence, he paused, and determined to struggle with his passion, and rather relinquish for a few months the rapture of calling her his, than do both himself and her so material an injury.—" My dear father," said he, after some hesitation, " I think, that is, if you approve, I will at least try my success; chance appears to have thrown this opportunity in my way, which it might be folly to neglect. Bless me, then,

then, my respected parents; I feel I shall be successful, and soon, very soon, trust to return and claim Agnes."

"May'st thou be blessed, my son! yet let me conjure thee not to be too sanguine; hope frequently leads us to flatter ourselves with fallacious expectations, which redouble the pangs of disappointment. Nothing is certain in this transitory state. Even I, who have been blessed above the common lot of mortals, far from the bustle of the world, happy in a partner to share my joys and cares, and children, whose duty can only be equalled by their affection, yet even I have met with sorrow; think then, on the turbulent sea of public life, how much greater must be thy trials. I mean not to depress, but prepare thee, my son: but the night is far spent—let us retire; and Heaven resolve thee for the best!"

Mrs. Godwin had not spoken during

this discourse, though at the conclusion would also have blessed him; but emotion, arising from maternal tenderness, rendered her voice inarticulate; and pressing him in her arms, she followed her husband to his chamber.

William remained silent while they were preparing to go to rest. The conduct of Edwin had astonished him, for he had not the most distant idea but that every scheme would have been relinquished for an immediate union with Agnes: what then was his disappointment when he heard him resign it! He could scarcely credit the evidence of his senses, nor could he even yet arrange his thoughts; but bidding his brother a good-night, in apparent uneasiness, he ejaculated—"Unhappy Agnes! Ah, Edwin! thou hast either less love or more philosophy than me!"

CHAP-

CHAPTER V.

THE next morning farmer Bernard, on William and Edwin's calling there, renewed the discourse of the preceding evening. His heart was equally honest as that of Godwin; but his understanding being inferior, he was more fascinated by the offers made to Edwin, whom he warmly pressed to accept them, priding himself in the idea that he should hereafter look up to a son-in-law who would not only constitute the happiness of his beloved daughter, but also be the wealthiest man in either family. Under this persuasion he rallied his daughters on their dislike to his departure; for Fanny more openly expressed her disapprobation than Agnes, who declared, though tears falsified her words, that she

was

was perfectly content to acquiesce in whatever Edwin might think would conduce to his advantage. Edwin, though wounded by Agnes's tears, was notwithstanding so strongly borne away by the infatuation of acquiring wealth, that it mastered every other consideration; and reinforced in this opinion by Bernard, after tenderly repeating his vows to Agnes, it was determined he should declare his acceptance of Whitmore's proffer in the afternoon.—This business settled, Fanny, who had not seen the elder Godwin, proposed a walk thither to Agnes, who readily agreed to accompany her.

If Agnes had passed a disagreeable night, that of Emma had not been more pleasant; she could not forget, even for a moment, that Whitmore was married. "Yet what is it to me?" said she. "I shall never see him more, without my parents give me leave to visit Mrs. Delmer;

Delmer; and indeed I have scarcely any wish they should: yet, to be sure, Mr. Whitmore's being married is no reason to prevent me. Poor man! he appears very unhappy; he seems deserving of being beloved. So sensible, good-tempered, and handsome, his wife must be a strange character not to endeavour to conciliate his affections; nay, her neglect of him, when she knew his arm was broken, shews she must have an unfeeling heart; for had he been my husband," concluded Emma, " I would even have walked twice the distance that separated them, sooner than that any other should have taken those cares that properly belonged to me."

In the morning Whitmore was the first in the parlour, where he was soon joined by Mr. and Mrs. Godwin. " My friends," said he, " I know not how to apologize for my behaviour of last night; yet, if you knew my unhappiness, I think I should stand excused, though in truth

truth my misfortunes have no right, even for a moment, to cast a gloom on our happiness; yet, when I contemplate the bliss possible to be enjoyed in the marriage state, and compare it with my own misery, I cannot forbear accusing Fortune of unkindness."

"My dear sir," interrupted Godwin, "I entreat you not to mention it; and am extremely sorry you do not enjoy that happiness you appear so well to merit."

Whitmore replied only by a sigh:—he thought the pique he could not avoid shewing the night before, required some apology, and therefore had determined to persuade the good farmer that his matrimonial discontents totally originated in his lady—a circumstance which he thought would excuse his conduct to the family, and perhaps inspire the gentle breast of Emma, to whom he judged it would be repeated, with pity—a sentiment

ment he had no doubt, some time or other, to improve into one more congenial to his wishes.

The entrance of Mrs. Delmer and Emma prevented more conversation on Mr. Whitmore's family discontents; but he saw with secret exultation that the lively features of Emma were overspread with an uncommon cast of seriousness: a circumstance that not a little flattered him with success in the plan he meditated, in recompence for the hospitality he had received. Indeed, in this case he conceived that no injury could accrue; for could he gain Emma's heart, the obligation would be mutual; she should share his fortune, and, from the prejudices of a country life and narrow education, be raised at once to be the envy of the women, and the desire of the men. Had her brothers been affluent, they might have been expected to resent such an insult; but Whitmore feared no man—

his

his sword was ever ready to defend the vices of its owner; and in this case the anger of two simple youths, the curses of an aged father, or the anguish of his innocent partner, never intruded on his imagination. Slave to his passions, they bore him like a rapid torrent against all impediment, redoubling by obstruction and difficulty; so that when once resolved on any purpose, the vivacity of his temper, and errors of his education, represented the pursuit he was engaged in as dependent on his honour to be accomplished.

Breakfast was hardly over before Willam and Edwin entered, accompanied by Fanny and Agnes, unconscious of beauty, though fair

"As op'ning flow'rs untainted yet with wind."

Fanny, with a frankness that peculiarly distinguished her, regardless of the strangers, flew to salute Mrs. Godwin, then threw her arms around the venerable

able father of her lover. "Bless thee, my child!" exclaimed the good man, kissing her with the affection of a parent; "may Heaven hereafter reward thy duty and innocence with children faultless in mind and form as thyself!"

"Amen," involuntarily articulated William, viewing his father and intended wife with a rapture that gave redoubled animation to his fine dark eyes. A momentary blush suffused the face of Fanny; but silently thanking Mr. Godwin with a kiss, she hastened to testify her affection to Emma, while Agnes, equally lovely, but more timid, replaced her in the arms of the respectable pair.

"What a scene!" said Whitmore, in a low voice to his sister, who had withdrawn towards the window; "what enchanting women!"

"Passable," replied Mrs. Delmer, carelessly viewing Agnes with scrutinizing attention, in vain endeavouring to discover

cover defects in a face and form that envy itself must have pronounced faultless. The family congratulations over, Whitmore advanced with his natural ease and good-breeding, and joined in the conversation. Emma, an hour before, he had thought a finished model of innocent beauty; but now, though he could not allow her eclipsed, he saw her at least equalled; and had there been the smallest room for hope of gaining an interest in the bosom of the fair sisters, his heart would have cherished passion; but as it was, each fortified by an affection that precluded his flattering himself with success, he contemplated only Emma as equally lovely and doubly desirable, as her heart was not prepossessed, or, if otherwise, only partial to himself.

Mrs. Delmer, who, in spite of pride or wealth, found a strong inclination to love Edwin, was not quite so secure. In

Agnes

Agnes she beheld a beloved and much to be dreaded rival; and though she could boast affluence, accomplishments, and a person generally allowed handsome, she was by no means certain whether the weak prejudices of Edwin might not lead him to prefer the humble village maid, unadorned but by Nature, and rich only in worth and innocence. She indeed flattered herself that the partiality she felt for the handsome rustic, was merely the effect of being immured in the country, where no pleasing objects had presented: yet a number of circumstances might have proved to a curious observer, that Edwin, however unintentionally, had a firmer hold on her affections; she had been satisfied, nay, apparently happy while at Inglewood, though deprived of all those fashionable amusements and gratifications that she had considered during the life of her husband so essential to her felicity, and which she had been in haste to partake as soon as

etiquette would permit. The idea once started of Edwin's going with them to town, she warmly espoused it, and anxiously wished to see him placed in a manner she considered more respectable, without examining her own heart for the real motive. Whitmore was not blind to this partiality, though it was far from being suspected by any one else; now and then it gave him awkward sensations, but which were quickly vanquished by his favourite tenets—that all were free agents, and passions were given to be gratified; and so his sister preserved the respect of the world and her rank in society, for he had not the most distant idea of her sinking it in an ill-suited marriage, he cared little about a transitory amour, though, had any one reflected on his sister's chastity, he would have defended it with his life; yet not from any affection of her person or virtue, but merely because custom demanded such conduct in a man of *honour*. In short,

affluence,

affluence, and the concomitant evils of having it in his power to gratify all his foibles and vices, had perverted a soul naturally noble and brave, to render him merely a modern man of fashion.

After a stay of two hours, Fanny and Agnes took leave of the family, and returned, accompanied by their lovers. Mr. Godwin withdrew to his fields, his wife to superintend her dairy, Mr. Whitmore to his apartment, and soon after Mrs. Delmer to hers, complaining of a slight indisposition; though, in reality, her only sickness was the beauty of Agnes, and the fear of supplanting so dangerous a rival. Emma, thus left alone, for some time indulged a thousand melancholy thoughts she had formerly been a stranger to, and all which had only existence since the introduction of Whitmore at the Forest. At length, weary with unprofitable thinking, and in no humour to resume the little domestic

cares that used to amuse her, she carelessly took up a book that Mrs. Delmer had accidentally left on the table. It was an elegantly-written fiction, in which the hero, unable to combat his passion for a married woman, had terminated his existence. Emma's heart was not formed of unfeeling materials, and the catastrophe cost her many tears. The heroine was represented virtuous, yet she apparently loved the suicide—circumstances that Emma had thought incompatible, for how, had ever before whispered her innocent heart, can a good woman love any man but her husband? The hapless lover too was mentioned with pity and tenderness—sentiments in which the humanity of Emma coincided; but no one deplored what she had ever been taught to believe, that suicide was everlasting perdition; nor was she displeased at the omission of this circumstance—the tenderness of her disposition leading her to sympathize with the sufferer, and pity those

those errors her education had taught her to abhor.

Thus did the dangerous elegance of the pathetic tale at once undermine "all that the priest and nurse had taught," and which her father had never contradicted; leaving those ideas implanted on the mind which he thought might tend to the general good; or otherwise, trusting to time and reason to develop in the breasts of his children sentiments which he found inexplicable, consonant with the philanthropy which actuated all his thoughts and actions; for his heart, like uncle Toby's, would not have damned the Devil himself to all eternity, much less the errors of fallible mortality. Weakness and folly he considered with pity, and, when in his power, he endeavoured to reclaim; but vice and cruelty he saw with an abhorrence that made its perpetrators ever shunned by him.

 Whitmore,

Whitmore, who had loitered from his apartment to the garden, passed the window, and perceiving Emma alone, pushed by the woodbines that almost obscured it, and entered into conversation with her.—"Good Heaven!" cried he, with insinuating tenderness, "you have been weeping, my lovely friend! Pardon my intrusion; but surely, after the kindness I have experienced, I may be allowed to feel an interest in the sorrows of one whom numberless circumstances have contributed to render dear to me."

"Indeed," replied Emma, "I believe few people have less real cause for sorrow than myself, blest as I am with kind and affectionate relatives; but to confess the truth, this book of Mrs. Delmer's has affected me greatly, though I suppose it is not true; nay, I hope not, for the idea is dreadful; and though our curate says there is no pardon for suicide, I trust he is mistaken."

"Can you doubt it?" replied Whitmore.

more. "God is too merciful to punish errors which fatal necessity obliges us to commit: priests, indeed, of all ages, have promulgated doctrines to keep weak minds in awe; but can you, gentle Emma, for a moment suppose that sentiments, which are the result of reflection and reason, can be culpable? surely not. The unhappy suicide there represented loved, it is true, a married woman, but one whom a number of untoward circumstances had made such, without her heart being consulted, and in which situation she might, perhaps, have remained passably content during life, had not that imperceptible attraction, which unites some hearts, convinced her of her mistake, and her lover of his misery, for nothing to hope," added he, with a sigh, "an insuperable bar being placed between him and the object of his dearest wishes, who can condemn him for throwing off a load which he found insupportable? Believe me, there

are situations which demand more fortitude to sustain than falls to the share of weak mortality. You, my fair friend, who are made to be only once seen and for ever idolized, can form no idea of the torments of despairing affection."—The entrance of the old servant to lay the cloth here broke off the discourse, and Whitmore withdrew from the window, to join the hospitable party at dinner.

The cloth was no sooner removed than Whitmore, who could not possibly frame any excuse for a longer stay, mentioned his intention of quitting Inglewood in two days, expressing his wishes that Edwin would accompany him.

The young man accepted his offer with modest thanks, saying—"As he had his father's permission, he would attend him, and endeavour to merit his kindness."

Mrs. Delmer's eyes at this reply sparkled

kled with pleasure; while Whitmore expressed his satisfaction in the warmest terms, declaring—"That however successful he might be in his attempts to serve Edwin, yet the obligation must ever remain on his side."

CHAPTER VI.

NOTHING material passed the day intervening Whitmore's departure, the whole family being much dispirited; even Edwin, though at times elate with the flattering prospect before him, could not, unmoved, think on a separation from parents so beloved, and the woman whose happiness had heretofore been his first and dearest consideration.

The evening previous to his departure, in presence of William and Fanny, he

his vows to Agnes, who could only answer with her tears, concealing her face in the bosom of her sister; while he articulated an adieu scarcely audible, then forced himself away, goaded on by ambition, though at the same moment he was more than half inclined to relinquish all for love.

In the morning, after repeated farewells, the travellers took their way towards the metropolis, leaving the anxious farmer and his wife, with Emma, watching the carriage while it remained in sight; the aged pair in silent prayers for the safety of their son, and Emma, though her eyes overflowed with tears; exulting in the future prospect, that Edwin would return, possessed of that wealth her heart had lately thought so essential to human happiness.

William had risen at the earliest dawn of day, and taken an affectionate, though melancholy

melancholy adieu of his brother, whom he entreated not to be displeased that he did not stay to see him depart, as he thought his presence at Bernard's might, in some measure, alleviate the sorrow with which the gentle sisters appeared overwhelmed.

Edwin having acquiesced in the propriety of this measure, William immediately repaired to Bernard's, where he found them already risen, their swollen eyes sufficiently bearing testimony of their having passed a restless night. William exerted all his endeavours to sooth the mind of Agnes, representing the absence cf Edwin as trivial, and which would be greatly alleviated by the weekly receipt of letters. He also urged his flattering prospects; and, finally, what appeared to have still more weight, that he had no doubt but that in a few months Edwin would return, and claim her promised hand. True friendship

 seldom

seldom fails of its effect, especially when assisted by such welcome arguments. By degrees Agnes became more reconciled to the separation; and though she still continued to sigh, her grief was neither so agonizing to herself, nor so painful to others. On her quitting the room—"Generous William!" said Fanny, "will you ever thus kindly share my sorrows? for in alleviating those of Agnes, how have you calmed mine! but why do I ask, when I know you will? All I fear is, that my utmost efforts will never be sufficient to shew my gratitude."

While the tears still flowed for Edwin's departure, Mr. Whitmore, with his sister and *protégé*, by easy stages arrived at his elegant villa, where he was received by Mrs. Whitmore, not with the inquiring tenderness of a wife, but with the refined politeness of an accomplished but common acquaintance. Whitmore having

having coldly saluted her, first presented his sister, then Edwin; the former she received with a genteel compliment, but the latter only excited a stare of astonishment; for though Edwin might have been classed among the most finished of Nature's works, he still wanted numberless appendages to make him a fine gentleman; such as a fashionable tailor and hair-dresser, an unblushing confidence, together with a long train of *ct ceteras:* these fashionable introductories being wanting, Mr. Whitmore was obliged to find a substitute.—"To this young man's father," said he, "I am under the greatest obligations, and have therefore, taken the care of his fortune on myself; his *mauvaise honte* will evaporate daily; I have no doubt in a single year to see him so metamorphosed, that his nearest friends will not know him."

Mrs. Whitmore coldly bid him welcome, and retired with her sister to dress, where she more particularly inquired

quired concerning him.—"What a rustic!" exclaimed she; "surely, when Mr. Whitmore had paid for the trouble he had given, it was unnecessary to encumber himself with this lad, for what can he possibly do with him? it is plain he don't intend him for a domestic by his introduction; and, with his curled locks and rosy cheeks, he is fit for nothing else."

"I cannot agree with you," replied Mrs. Delmer; "I think his person, when rendered a little more fashionable, might grace any situation; besides, my brother had no other way of shewing his gratitude to the family, as they refused all pecuniary recompence; for, though farmers, their situation is perfectly easy: for the young man, he has really had a good education, and, I think, has the finest hair, eyes, and teeth, I ever saw."

"My dear sister," returned Mrs. Whitmore, laughing, "your long residence in the country with your late spouse

spouse may have given you a taste for the uncultivated beauties of nature; but for me, who have been bred and wedded in the highest degree of fashion, I must confess I prefer the exotic sweets of the orange-flower to the uncultivated fragrance of the woodbine: besides, he is a mere nobody, a peasant, a farmer's son; and, did all the graces that ever poets feigned centre in this Corydon, what would it avail, when he knows not how to use them? Why, he can neither walk, dance, nor talk like a man of the world; however, I confess he has an able master, and in a short time we shall be able to judge of his genius."

Mrs. Delmer, glad to change the subject, began a number of inquiries, which her sister was necessarily obliged to answer, and that soon drove the rustic Edwin from her thoughts.

The behaviour of Mrs. Whitmore to

Edwin

Edwin in future was polite, but distant, as if fearful that, should she be more condescending, he might forget the distance fortune had placed between them; that of Mr. Whitmore and Mrs. Delmer, on the contrary, was friendly and warm: but as no mention was for some time made of the situation designed for him, it gave him uneasiness, as he was too clear-sighted not to view the behaviour of Mrs. Whitmore in its proper light. In his letters to his father and Agnes he expressed himself perfectly satisfied; but in one to his brother William he was more explicit.

"MY DEAR BROTHER,

"Although I have to my father and Agnes declared myself content, yet to you I will not disguise that I almost repent leaving Inglewood. The manners of the people here are so totally different from ours, that they both disgust

gust and distress me. I am frequently laughed at for blushing; and candour, which we have been taught to prize so highly, is banished from among them; while religion is treated as a jest, and scarcely ever mentioned but with ridicule. All this, my dear brother, is very disagreeable to me; yet the hopes of that advantage which influenced me to leave those so dear, must enable me to bear it. How often, William, do I wish my temper was more similar to yours! the arrows then that might be thrown at my country-education and manners might fall harmless, for you would disregard and despise them; while, on the contrary, I am humiliated by ridicule, and almost ashamed of being a farmer's son. I blush to relate this, even to you, though in your bosom I know my weakness is safe. We are yet at Mr. Whitmore's country-house, where we have much company. His lady is also here; she is very handsome and accomplished;

complished; but her insufferable pride to me makes her totally disagreeable. He is equally kind as when at the Forest, and, I have no doubt, will strictly keep his word in respect to me; therefore hide my discontents from my affectionate parents and my beloved Agnes, a separation from whom hangs heavy on my heart.

"Adieu, and believe me ever yours,

"E. GODWIN."

The happiness of his worthy parents, and that of the gentle Agnes, was too near the heart of William for him to shew the foregoing letter, not even Fanny being trusted with the contents, while in his own bosom he execrated the hour that Edwin left the Forest; nor did he fail to write speedily, and entreat his return; or if he determined to stay, conjured him to preserve his morals unimpaired, to beware of ill examples, nor suffer

suffer himself to be too soon elated, nor yet weakly depressed.

"A noble mind, Edwin," said he, in the conclusion of his letter, "is not degraded by the scorn of the unworthy. Art thou not an honest man? a name superior to the vain distinctions of wealth. Believe me, I would not exchange it for any unmeaning sound that fortune could bestow, even though pride should add the choice of all the monsters that heraldry ever created. Edwin, we are the sons of a virtuous and honest farmer, a man respected by his neighbours, and beloved by the poor; for the labour of no execrating slave enriches him, but wholesome industry and independence, hand in hand, accompany him through life. Sacred then is the trust reposed in us: let it be our glory to preserve his name unsullied, and transmit it untarnished to our descendants.—Return then, Edwin; the farmer's son, though scorned in

polite

polite circles, is here beloved, and his absence hourly lamented: no degrading concessions will be expected; on your return all will be joy and harmony—the only contention who shall caress you most."

Before Edwin received this letter he was, however, more reconciled to his situation, the kindness of Mrs. Delmer and her brother in some measure compensating for the *hauteur* of Mrs. Whitmore: he therefore wrote an immediate reply to William, affectionately thanking him, but declining to return, as Mr. Whitmore was soon to remove to London, where he hoped to be placed in the promised independence.

CHAPTER VII.

THE information Edwin had given his brother was verified in a few days after; for Mr. Whitmore, already weary of the country, and his lady no less so, determined to hasten to town. Indeed, he had never borne the country with any degree of patience until he saw Inglewood, and there the charms of Emma alone had rendered it pleasing; indeed the innocent Emma had at once given and received an impression not easily effaced. Whitmore could not avoid contrasting her in idea with the modish *belles* he daily beheld: her soft blue eyes sparkling through their dark lashes; her luxuriant ringlets, wantonly agitated by every wind, waving over her lovely forehead, and falling in untaught elegance to

to the small of her fine turned waist; the glowing blush of her cheeks, the sweet dimple and enchanting smile which played round her lovely mouth, all returned with redoubled ardour on his warm imagination, and increased his desire to again gaze on them, and, if possible, obtain them.—Edwin's promotion he thought the most probable means; for he then should be regarded as the distinguished friend of the family; and gratitude would give additional softness to the susceptible heart of Emma, in whose bosom he strongly suspected he had already an advocate. To combat her prejudices he knew would be difficult; but these difficulties, if he succeeded, would enhance his victory. With such an incentive, the active mind of Whitmore could enjoy but little rest, until he commenced his plan of operations; the removal to town was therefore the first step, and immediately put in execution.

In

In the mean time, the family at Inglewood were also forming their future plan of happiness—the good farmers had consented to the union of William and Fanny, as soon as the bans could be published. All therefore was preparation and impatience until the event took place; for never before did William experience three such tedious weeks.

Fanny had declined going to church the two first Sundays; but on the third, her father insisted on her accompanying him, as the new lady of the manor had arrived in the country two days before, and was expected at church. It was in vain she attempted to excuse herself—the old man was peremptory.

"What a pies, girl, art thou ashamed of?" said he. "If thou art ashamed of William, turn him off—it is not too late. All the tenants will be at church in the morning, in compliment to the

new

new lady, and why shouldst thou wish to be particular? I shall have no right to command thee after Monday; so prithee give me this proof of thy obedience."

"My dear father," replied Fanny, "you shall be obeyed; but why will you say that you shall have no right to command me hereafter? Have I ever shewn by my actions that I thought your commands painful?"

"No; thou wert always good and considerate; but thou knowest, Fanny, that my lease is nearly expired, and I should be sorry to appear wanting in respect."

Fanny, thus pressed, determined to obey her father; and accordingly, on Sunday, accompanied by Agnes, Emma, William, and their respectable parents, attended the parish-church, where they were scarcely seated, when (their new lady of the manor) Mrs. Palmer entered. All eyes were turned on their new-

comer,

comer, until the curate, in an audible voice, demanded, for the last time—"Whether there was any lawful impediment against the union of William Godwin and Frances Bernard?" This at once changed the object of curiosity, all eyes fixing on the intended bride and bridegroom; nor did Mrs. Palmer need any one to point out the parties—the downcast looks and blushing cheeks of Fanny, the eyes of William, "with love illumined high," fixed with rapturous, yet chastened expression on his future wife, proclaimed at once the happy pair.

Never before had honest Bernard imposed so painful a task on his daughter as that of attending him to church in so critical a situation; and was sincerely rejoiced when she reached Mr. Godwin's, where, with her father and sister, she had promised to pass the afternoon. In short, seated by her beloved William,

and surrounded by approving friends, she had almost forgotten the disagreeable sensations of the morning, when Bernard, who was nearest the window, suddenly exclaimed—"Why, as I live, here comes our new lady! what can possibly bring her?" Before any conjecture could be made on the reason of this visit, the lady had approached so near the gate, that politeness required Mr. Godwin should advance to meet her.—"You are welcome, madam," said the good man. "Will you add to your condescension by accepting a seat after your walk?" The lady having acquiesced, followed him into the parlour, where the whole party instantly rose to receive her.

"I pray you be seated," said she, taking her place. "You will give me pain if you treat me with so much ceremony; for though not personally acquainted, Mr. Godwin is well known to me, by the means of Mr. Burton, my late

late uncle's steward." Godwin bowed, then introduced his family—not forgetting Bernard and his daughter. All were received in a manner that marked true greatness, undisguised by affectation; for she loved to confer happiness, and pride had never yet prevented her from gratifying so praiseworthy an inclination. "My good friends," said she, with a smile, "though in this first visit I come an uninvited guest, I trust hereafter I may not prove an unwelcome one. As your daughter's marriage is the first after my arrival in the country, I entreat it may be celebrated at the Hall."

"I scarcely know how to express my gratitude for your condescension, madam," replied the farmer; "but my future daughter is anxious to have her marriage as private as possible; and, as it is to take place to-morrow, we should but be giving your family a world of unnecessary trouble."

"It will be none," replied Mrs. Pal-

mer. "My table needs but little preparation; therefore, my good girl," continued she, taking the hand of the trembling Fanny, "shall it not be as I say? My own family, and any guests you choose, shall constitute the whole company."

Fanny stole a look at her father; for though she would willingly have been excused, she well knew his temper, and remembered his anxiety for a renewal of his lease.—"My father and Mr. Godwin shall decide for me, madam," replied Fanny, modestly curtseying.

"Nay," hastily interrupted Bernard, "if my opinion is asked, I think it will be the height of ingratitude to refuse madam's offer; and as to the wedding being private, had I my own way, I should have invited half the country. I think a good action cannot have too many witnesses; but Fanny is so sheepish and bashful, that she cannot bear one to mention it to any-body, though she loves

loves William as her own life, and is never happy but when he is tied to her apron-string."

"Well, madam," interrupted Godwin, "as our good girl has referred herself to us, and I see it will gratify her father, with your leave we will avail ourselves of the honour you intend to confer on us; and our young folks will hereafter, I hope, shew they do not disgrace your kindness."

Mrs. Palmer expressed the utmost satisfaction at this determination, and after some general discourse, bid them farewell, having first desired them to breakfast at the Hall previous to their going to church, where she meant to accompany them.

Mrs. Palmer was scarcely out of sight, before Bernard gave way to the transport that almost overpowered him.—"There, girl," said he, "this comes of my

 advice,

advice. I have no fear of my lease now, and that will be so much the better for thee. Well, well, thou be'st a lucky girl, Fanny; and so will my Agnes too, never fear. The next thing will be, I suppose, our having news that Edwin is quite a gentleman, and coming down to fetch her." William sighed involuntarily, while Agnes silently dropped a tear. Ambition she had none, and would willingly have relinquished all the flattering prospects of future grandeur, to have been seated by Edwin's side in similar circumstances with her sister Fanny.

All the parties were loud in the praise of Mrs. Palmer: her person and affability furnished discourse for the whole afternoon, except when the subject gave way to the pity excited by her uneasiness; for she had lately buried an uncle, whose fortune she inherited, and to whose memory she was said to be most tenderly attached.

At

At an early hour they separated; William attending Bernard and his daughters home; where he lingered some time before he could bid them farewell, though only for the night. At length, tenderly saluting his destined wife, he whispered in her ear—"Thank God, my beloved Fanny, this is the last night we have to separate!" Then, without venturing another look, he ran from the house, and hastened home.

William arose with the sun the next morning; excessive happiness had kept him awake the whole night; he counted the hours with impatience, and beheld with rapture the stars give place to the dawn of day. He was soon equipped—a plain superfine drab suit constituting his whole bridal finery. His father was not yet risen. "He has surely overslept himself," said William. The clock struck. "Pish!" continued he,

 "that

"that clock has stood during the night; yet, if it has not, I should be sorry to disturb my father." With such ideas he descended the staircase, though far less cautiously than usual; nay, when he had reached the bottom, he was seized with a cough, which being heard by the farmer, he called aloud from his bed —"What, are you stirring already, my son? it is much too early to go to Bernard's." William was of a different opinion; and after having answered his father, that he should take a walk, hastened thither, predetermined, however, not to disturb his Fanny.* This determination was however unnecessary, for in a short time she appeared at the window, and presently after, with Agnes, joined him at the gate.

After conversing for two hours, the party was augmented by the arrival of some relations; and soon after came the

venerable

venerable Godwin, his wife, and daughter, accompanied by the guests who were invited to witness the ceremony.

Mutual congratulations having taken place, the company repaired to Mrs. Palmer's, where they found every thing prepared for their reception—the lady presiding at the breakfast-table in a manner that delighted her guests. At length the moment arrived that called them to church. Mrs. Palmer, with Mrs. Godwin and Bernard, in honest exultation, led the van; next followed Fanny, escorted by her future father-in-law and husband, whose

> "Speaking eye
> Express'd the sacred triumph of his soul,
> With conscious virtue, gratitude, and love,
> Above the vulgar joy divinely rais'd."

Then came the bridemaids, Agnes and Emma; and lastly, in pairs, the different relatives of both families. On

 entering

entering the church the service immediately began; and Bernard presenting his daughter to William, a few minutes fixed her irrevocably his.—" Fanny," said he, saluting her when the ceremony concluded, " thou art mine for ever, ever mine; and the study of my life shall be to deserve thee."

" And mine," whispered Fanny, " to repay your affection, William." He then advanced with her towards their fathers.—" Even here, oh! my parents," exclaimed he, " bless us here at the altar!—so shall your blessing be registered with our mutual vows, and doubly sanctify our union!"

Bernard, moved even to tears, could only sob his blessing as he saluted his children; but Godwin, firm and collected, advancing, said—" May the benediction of your Father who is in Heaven be added to that of a weak old man! Blessed may you be!—May every morn bring to ye joy like this! May ye live

in

in honour and happiness, and die surrounded by your children's children, whom I cannot wish worthier than being just representatives of their parents!"

Mrs. Palmer now congratulated the new-married pair, as did also the rest of the party; they then returned to the Hall, where an excellent but plain dinner was provided; after which the day was passed in innocent mirth and festivity, and the evening concluded with a ball; after which all parties retired to their respective homes—Mrs. Palmer, at their departure, presenting Fanny with a ring, in token of her future friendship.

CHAPTER VIII.

Mrs. Palmer was about thirty-six, her fortune large, and entirely at her own command, being bequeathed her by her lately-deceased uncle, whose death had spread a gloom over her natural cheerfulness; but nothing could obscure the philanthropy of her disposition: she had felt misfortune, therefore knew how to compassionate it in others, while to diffuse happiness was her highest gratification—"Ah!" exclaimed she when her guests departed, "how have these honest folks beguiled me from myself! What a respectable character is Godwin! How forcibly does he bring my uncle to my memory! It is not in the bustle of public life my mind can regain its wonted composure—it is in the calm exercise of domestic duties, in the society

of

of a chosen few, in acts of beneficence, which my fortune demands, and my heart applauds."

As such was the disposition of Mrs. Palmer, it may easily be supposed that her partiality for the Godwins increased daily; for joined to uncorrupted honesty, they possessed a degree of understanding that made them agreeable and conversable companions. Her superior rank had at first caused some little restraint, but her constant affability soon banished all reserve; and though they continued to look up to her with respect, it was so softened by affection and esteem, that her presence ever increased their cheerfulness, and redoubled their enjoyments.

William had, immediately on his marriage, written to acquaint his brother, who had returned his congratulations. Edwin was now in London; but the situation Mr. Whitmore mentioned had been dis-

posed

posed of previous to his application; he therefore was as yet unsettled—a circumstance that Mr. Whitmore treated so lightly, saying, the loss would be soon supplied, that it greatly contributed to alleviate the vexation Edwin would have otherwise experienced.

Mrs. Delmer, on her arrival in London, had immediately taken a house; and Mrs. Whitmore's perpetual engagements left Edwin under the entire guidance of her husband, who introduced him every where as his *protégé*. This condescension did not fail of its effect. Edwin looked up to Mr. Whitmore as a masterpiece of perfection, for his fine person and vivacity made him universally admired; and as for the spots of libertinism that shaded his character, they sat so easy, and appeared so little regarded by the gay part of the world, that Edwin began to think such errors not so very heinous as he had once imagined—a doctrine which Whitmore never

never failed to inculcate as often as occasion presented. This sophistry was proportionably dangerous as it was pleasant; the curb of education and religion had hitherto kept the passions of Edwin (which were naturally strong) in subjection; but he was now become a pupil to a declared votary of pleasure, who disdained to be withheld by the contracted bounds of reason. Thus Edwin's morals insensibly gave way; for though his heart still revered virtue, yet he began to regard the practice as more difficult than he had ever before experienced.

One evening, after having dined with Whitmore at a tavern, among a mixed company, where the glass was freely circulated, and Edwin, ashamed by the ridicule of his friend, had forgotten his usual temperance, as they adjourned homeward, Whitmore suddenly seeming to recollect himself, said, with a half-smile—" *A-propos*, I had forgot an indispensable

dispensable engagement which I made for to-night—you must accompany me." They then entered a hired vehicle, and soon reached an elegant house, where Whitmore appeared perfectly acquainted, introducing Edwin to an elderly lady and three young ones as his friend; at the same time desiring him to cultivate the acquaintance of his cousins.

Edwin bowed, and blushing, replied, "he was too much honoured by the condescension of Mr. Whitmore to neglect shewing his respect to any of his relatives." The ladies smiled archly at Whitmore, and seemed to demand an explanation, when, taking the youngest by the hand (a beautiful girl of eighteen), he presented her to Edwin, saying—"Here, Sophy, take charge of this young man; he is as bashful as you were a twelvemonth since, and blushes as frequently. Cannot you give him some advice how to get rid of such troublesome appendages?"

"I do

"I do not know," answered she, in a lively accent, at the same time fixing her eyes on his face, and taking his hand; "let me first consider his features: why, yes, I believe he will do in time. What say you, sir, will you be my scholar?"

Edwin was confused, he knew not what to reply, he trembled, his cheeks were dyed with crimson: even unacquainted as he was with the world, he could make no doubt, from the manner of the ladies, that they were of the number his education had taught him to abhor; yet, fearful of displeasing his friend Whitmore, and ashamed of avowing his sentiments, he remained silent; his hand locked in that of the youthful Circe, who appeared in no haste to resign it.

During the evening, mirth, even to licentiousness, prevailed over the whole party, except Edwin. He, pressed by the

the caresses of his selected companion, and withheld by the recollection of Agnes, knew not how to act, and alternately underwent paroxysms of both fever and ague. At length an elegant supper was served up; the wine went briskly round, the most lascivious songs were sung, Whitmore and the ladies repeatedly pressing Edwin to drink, until his natural timidity began to give way; Whitmore then pretending first to recollect the hour, exclaimed—"It is past two—we shall but disturb my family; can we intrude on you, ladies, for this night?"

The elder answered in the affirmative, desiring two of her daughters (as she styled them) to shew the gentlemen to their respective apartments.

Edwin hesitated; but his head giddy with wine, and his heart intoxicated with a vicious inclination, his wanton companion

companion soon gained the ascendancy, and led him on to his chamber—where Inglewood, Agnes, and Virtue, were soon forgotten!

CHAPTER IX.

As opium can for a while deaden the anguish of the body, so may vice for a short time stifle the pangs of conscience; but, as in the first instance, when the effect ceases, the pain returns, so in the latter, reason no sooner regains her empire than the delusion vanishes, and we view our deeds simply as they are. Thus was it with Edwin—with the morning came disgust and calm reflection—in the bitterness of his regret he cursed Whitmore, detested his companion, and despised himself, resolving to hasten back to Inglewood, and endeavour to repair the error

error he had been unwarily drawn into, by the future prudence of his conduct. On his meeting with Whitmore he was serious and reserved, being fully determined to inform him, on the first opportunity, of his intentions. Whitmore, on the contrary, was even more than commonly cheerful, exerting his utmost vivacity to entertain Edwin, but in vain; and he had undoubtedly declared his resolution, had they not been joined immediately on their quitting the house by a friend of Whitmore's, who accompanied them home. Edwin, on his arrival, immediately retired, to his apartment, where he, for some time, had given way to the vexation that overpowered him, when he was interrupted by the entrance of a servant with a packet that had been left during his absence.— "It is from my brother," said he, as the man quitted the room, without regarding the address, "and contains others from my father, from Agnes—and to

whom?

whom? to a drunkard, a debauchee, a perjured, execrable villain, whose contaminated soul ought for ever to be deprived of such blessings!—Oh, Agnes! accursed be the hour I left thee! and doubly accursed that in which I was proof against thy tears! I dare not open the letters—they will contain nothing but expressions of kindness, and sooner at this moment could I face death." As he spoke he pushed the packet from him, but his eye involuntarily glancing over the direction, he perceived it was neither William's nor his father's hand. As he had no other correspondents, a thousand fears at once agitated him; and curiosity mastering every other sensation, he hastily broke it open, and to his infinite surprise, instead of letters, found a commission for an ensigncy filled up in his own name, and a bank-note for a hundred pounds; but no line to infer from whence the present came. Amazement kept him for

for some moments silent; he could scarcely believe his eyes; and every other idea being banished by the present occurrence, he started up, and hastened to Mr. Whitmore, whom he had no doubt had chosen this method to surprise him. Whitmore was alone, and if the astonishment of Edwin had been great, his, if possible, was yet superior. The army he had never thought of; nor had the most distant idea of such a measure ever taken place in the mind of Edwin, though to Mr. Whitmore he was convinced he owed it; for unknown to any one in London, to whom else could he suppose himself indebted? Mr. Whitmore at first strongly denied it; but a few moments recollection made him change his manner into simple congratulations on the event, neither absolutely denying, nor yet positively acknowledging it; then, after some slight discourse, taking his hat, left the house. Edwin remained alone some time, bewildered

wildered in a multiplicity of different ideas, the errors of the preceding night only lightly intruding on his mind; the return to Inglewood was also forgotten, or at least delayed, until he should go to claim Agnes as his bride, which he had now no doubt of being soon able to perform; for imagination had already raised him from an ensign to a colonel at least.

In the mean time Whitmore hastened to his sister, on whom his suspicions immediately glanced; nor did he hesitate to disclose them. Mrs. Delmer at first firmly denied any knowledge of the business; but Whitmore's eyes and interrogatories were too penetrating for him to be long deceived. At length, said he—" You well know my sentiments in general; yet I hold the good opinion of the world of some moment, particularly when relative to women, and more especially when they are young and handsome:

some: consider then how this business, should it ever be known, would be canvassed by the old and envious. I have indeed myself for some time suspected you had a partiality for Edwin, but hope your pride will always prevent an improper step."

"I need not tell you, Whitmore," said she, laughing at his unusual gravity, "that I am twenty-seven, a widow, possessed of an affluent fortune and independent spirit; having well-considered all those matters, I am predetermined to act according to my own inclination. As for the commission, if you will father that brat for me, I shall be obliged to you, as I would not wish to encounter Mrs. Whitmore's raillery on the occasion; therefore, my friend, I am willing to resign to you all the merit of doing a generous action without the expence. In the army the meanness of Edwin's origin will be the most effectually concealed, as I have no doubt he may speedily gain

gain rank; now, as to my having entertained a partiality for the young man, admitting the supposition, who has a right to restrain me? have I not fortune enough for both?"

Whitmore not being able to combat the force of such *irresistible* arguments, thought it the best policy to take the commission on himself, leaving her in other respects to act without control, as he well knew that contradiction would rather strengthen than extinguish her predilection; besides, were she as partial to Edwin as he suspected, yet he was unacquainted with her weakness, and strongly attached to Agnes.

Whitmore, on his return home, though he still denied sending the commission, gave Edwin every reason, from his vague answers, to suppose, at least, that it came with his privacy. Edwin would have fain returned the note; but this Whit-

more strenuously refused, saying—"that he would want that sum at least to equip him for his new employ; for which purpose a capital army-tailor was immediately sent for, to decorate his outside with the usual *insignia* of valour. While these exterior marks of a soldier were in preparation, Whitmore did not fail procuring other necessary appendages, viz. a fencing-master, and a skilful teacher of military tactics.

The occurrences of this busy, and, to Edwin, pleasing day were no sooner over, than he sat down to write to the family at Inglewood, acquainting them "that Mr. Whitmore had procured him a commission; and likewise had, with unparelleled delicacy and generosity, presented him with a sufficient sum to equip him in a manner that should not disgrace it." He likewise wrote to Agnes. As usual, he lamented the separation from her, and vowed to see her as

soon

soon as possible; but, alas! in the exultation of the moment, even love appeared to hold only a second place in his heart—ambition, like an impetuous torrent, bearing all before it.

CHAPTER X.

EDWIN'S letter reached the family at Inglewood as they were seated in high glee in Godwin's parlour. Bernard had some days before ventured to the Hall, and mentioned his wish of renewing his lease; in which Mrs. Palmer had immediately acquiesced, granting him a long term at his usual rent—a circumstance that exceeded Bernard's most sanguine expectations, who, amidst a profusion of thanks, concluded with saying—"I have one more favour to beg, madam, which

is, that the lease may be drawn in my son-in-law's name; but he shall know nothing about it until it is signed; for he is such an obstinate fellow, I should never get him to consent."

Mrs. Palmer, pleased with the blunt integrity of the farmer, dismissed him, saying—"she left the whole business to himself, and would sign it whenever he was prepared."

Three days after, all being in readiness, Bernard called on his son-in-law, desiring he would accompany him to witness the completion of the lease—a summons he immediately obeyed. Mrs. Palmer, having ordered her steward to be summoned, the parchments were produced, and William directed where to set his name, on the supposition of witnessing the deed. The other parties having likewise affixed their names, and the whole concluded, Bernard could no longer conceal his exultation; but bowing to Mrs. Palmer,

Palmer, said—"I thank you, madam; William, I trust, will shew himself a worthy tenant to so kind a lady."

"I do not doubt it," replied she; "and had I changed you for any other, I should have felt dissatisfied; but, as it is, I am rather inclined to congratulate you, as the business will now fall on one more able to support it."

William, after a moment's recollection, comprehended the whole affair; but well knowing that all remonstrance would be vain, he simply returned his thanks to both parties, concluding by saying to Bernard—"Though you have in this business acted in a manner contrary to my wishes, I shall still regard the farm as yours during your life; and should I survive you, as held in trust for my sister Agnes: a dependence on my father I by no means wish to shake off, nor does my Fanny find it painful; why then, my dear sir, would you wish us to change?"

"You are too proud, William," replied the old man, with emotion; "you do not like to be obliged to me, though I love you as well as your own father."

"And do I not revere you equally?" answered William. "He gave me life, and with the most tender care watched over my childhood; but you, in giving me Fanny, bestowed a treasure far superior to the whole world without her."

The farmer's reply was a hearty shake by the hand, saying—"A good lad, a brave fellow, I can never do enough for thee." Then making his obeisance to Mrs. Palmer, again repeated his thanks, and with his son-in-law returned to Godwin.

As they walked, the old man's heart seemed full. At length, "William," said he, "Agnes and I lead but a dull life since thou hast taken Fanny from us; the foolish girl does nothing but sigh, and her eyes are for ever red with crying after Edwin, though she knows, and

and I am for ever telling her, it is all for his good: now, if thou and Fanny were with us, we should be as happy as the day is long."

William replied—"It was a case in which he should be entirely guided by the joint agreement of himself and Mr. Godwin; that he truly confessed he should be much grieved to leave his father, and equally so to refuse the parent of his wife what would give him such apparent satisfaction."

This conversation brought them home; where neither Bernard nor William appeared in haste to disclose the manœuvre at the Hall, until Bernard, after dinner, ventured to inform them what he had done, and which, to his great vexation, he found all disapproved, except Agnes. Godwin indeed consented that William should reside with Bernard; but the gloom which overspread his venerable features, on the idea of his son forsaking his paternal

roof, plainly shewed how reluctantly the permission was given. Emma had sat for some time a silent observer, when, at length, starting up with great liveliness, she cried—"Though no one has asked my opinion, I shall give it notwithstanding; I hate this division of families: we all love one another, why then cannot we live together? Our house is far larger than Mr. Bernard's, and here is plenty of room for us all."

Bernard made no reply, but fixing his eyes on Mr. Godwin, appeared to wait his opinion with anxiety.—"Indeed, Emma," replied Godwin, "I know but few things that would give me greater satisfaction than the constant company of my friend Bernard, if——"

"If what?" interrupted the farmer. "Why, if you and your good dame like on't, it's a bargain; for I lead but a moping life yonder. With you I shall be as happy as a prince; we can smoke a pipe, and drink a jug of ale, and envy

no

no one under the sun. Old age will steal on me unperceived, and I shall die surrounded by those I love best."

Among a party so determined to act in unison, an agreement was soon made, and Emma embraced and caressed as the author of the present happiness; for though it was apparent from the conduct of all, how much satisfaction the proposal had given, yet, had not her vivacity started it, in all probability it had never taken place.

"Nay, nay, Fanny," exclaimed Emma, "don't kiss me; you only do it to conceal your tears. Here, William, pray comfort her. I have other business to mind," throwing her arms round Bernard's neck, and saluting him with the affection of a daughter.—"You are a good-natured man, and I love you dearly." Here the sound of the postman's horn at the gate broke off their mutual greet-

 ings;

ings; and William hastening out, soon returned with a letter addressed to his father. All equally eager to hear from Edwin, Godwin began to read the contents aloud, but had no sooner communicated the intelligence of Edwin's gaining a commission, than Agnes fell from her seat, deprived of sense or motion. Every other idea was now lost in her situation, until at length slowly reviving, she was led to Emma's chamber, and laid on her bed; where, after some time, she entreated to be left alone, which being complied with, and the party again assembled, Godwin concluded the letter, and each gave their respective opinions. Bernard was in raptures; Edwin was already a gentleman; for his part, he had no patience with Agnes, who could suffer herself to be depressed by what ought to give her the highest pleasure.

"Yet when you consider, my dear father," interrupted Fanny, "that Edwin, by

by this step, and in all probability Agnes, will be for ever estranged and distant from us, yourself will surely not see it in so flattering a point of view. Should we not have been happier, think you, all together in our original destination?"

"True, true, girl, I can't say but it would have been very comfortable; but then only think, when he comes to fetch Agnes, how the whole country will stare—how I shall enjoy it! besides, every man has not the same luck; and many men, many minds; Edwin was born for a gentleman, and William for a farmer."

"So truly do I feel what you advance," answered William, "and so thoroughly sensible am I of the blessings I enjoy, that were it in my power to choose my situation, I would reject a change. Nature, in giving me a constitution able, and a heart willing to labour, has done her part; and never in my person shall the active farmer degenerate into the

useless gentleman. Edwin has chosen a more distinguished part in the business of life—a defender of his country, and a minister of its vengeance. Oh! may equity guide him, and success and honour attend him! For me, no aspiring thoughts find place in my bosom; let kings defend their possessions and treasure—sufficient to me is the defence of mine to shield those I love from care, to cultivate my lands, to guard my flocks, and to shelter them from the wintry blast. Thus let me live and die; too humble to excite envy, and too happy to envy any one. Can riches give more? or rather, can they give so much? my heart says no; I am peculiarly blest, and can look down with pity on kings, and the painful, uncertain splendour that surrounds them."

"Ah! would to Heaven," exclaimed Mrs. Godwin, weeping, "that my beloved boy had never left us, to fall perhaps in a foreign land! no careful mother

ther to sooth his dying hours, no tender father to see him laid in the earth! Miserable woman that I am, why did I consent to his departure?"

"Be comforted, dear friend of my youth, said the venerable Godwin, taking his wife by the hand; never can my heart know peace while thou art sad; neither can it ever be completely overwhelmed while thou art spared to bless me. Look," continued he, affectionately viewing his family, "consider the blessings that surround thee, and canst thou repine? Like thyself, I could have wished Edwin's destination otherwise; but as it is, Heaven speed him in the just cause; and God's will be done!"

"My dear mother," said Emma, drying her tears, "our Edwin will, I hope, be safe from danger, and an honour to us. I think I already see him so elegant and handsome in his fine scarlet clothes, his hair powdered, and his sword by his side!

side! oh! I am sure I shall love him a thousand times better than ever."

"I pray ye, Fanny," said William, smiling, and wishing to enliven the discourse, "if the old tailor should call when I am absent, bespeak me a scarlet coat; and when you go into the cheese-chamber, bring down the rusty cutlass, it shall no longer be employed against the rats, but hung to my side; for I am determined that Emma shall love *me* a thousand times more than ever, since her affection is so easily obtained."

"You may say what you please," replied Emma, "but he will look delightfully. Oh! how pleased I shall be when he comes back! the very first Sunday he shall go with Agnes and me to church! Lord! not one of the girls, I'll be bound, will know the text."

"I fear," answered Godwin, "that you judge of others by yourself, Emma; but for the present, drop the subject,

and

and go to Agnes, whose unassuming heart, like my own, I fancy, would prefer a russet frock to a scarlet coat and cockade." Emma obeyed; and during her absence it was agreed that, as the subject apparently gave so much uneasiness to Agnes, it should be touched upon as little as possible; and that the whole party should appear to view the change in Edwin's affairs in a promising light.

The next day Godwin took the opportunity of being alone, to write to his son; never before had he found the task so painful. He wished not to lessen the pleasure Edwin appeared to experience from his success, yet could not congratulate him upon what overwhelmed his heart with sorrow.—"Merciful Creator!" exclaimed he, laying down the pen, "what words can I use? my son a soldier! a man licensed to shed blood—the blood of those who never wronged him! nay, perhaps, to lose his own in quarrels

in which his heart has no share! a heart so tender, kind, and dutiful, to become at once so hardened, as to triumph in the destruction of his fellow-creatures! Congratulate him!—ah! no; it is impossible: I will simply tell him that I am glad he is satisfied, but that for myself, I should have preferred any other situation. Fascinated as he appears, I will not openly shew my disgust, but by lenient methods endeavour to awaken his real disposition, which, for some time, has appeared clouded by ambition, or he had never left his family and betrothed bride to follow a vain and empty shadow."

Godwin's letter was, as he expressed, mild, yet energetic. He did not command his son's return, but introduced subjects which he thought might encourage it; as the happiness of William—the kindness of Mrs. Palmer—uneasiness of Agnes—the new arrangement between the

the families—and finally, if he did not find a very particular attachment to the new profession he was engaged in, Bernard's farm was entirely at his command, as William only held it in trust for Agnes, and would rejoice to relinquish it.—The letter concluded, he shewed it to no one, that in case he was disappointed, they might not judge of his vexation, nor yet too harshly of Edwin; he then joined Bernard, who was seated with his jug of ale before him. Filling a bumper, he drank to Edwin's health, concluding with a wish that "he might live to be a general."

"Heaven forbid!" involuntarily ejaculated Godwin; "for how much carnage must he wade through before he could arrive at that height!"

CHAP.

CHAPTER XI.

EDWIN's letter had reached the family at Inglewood as they were in the midst of innocent joy and friendship. Godwin's answer was also received by Edwin in a moment of exultation; for he had entered upon and assumed the dress of his new profession, gaudy distinguishing scarlet. Strange, that the ministers of a business so replete with horror as that of war, should wear so triumphant and gay a habit, while those of religion are clothed in mournful black, which appears to denote their profession gloomy, mysterious, and sad!—Hateful prevarication! true religion is simple, clear, and open as truth, and needs no habit of assumed gravity to implant it on the human heart.

'Since

'Since God is ever present, ever felt,
In the void waste, as in the city full;
And where He vital spreads, there must be joy."

Whitmore had introduced Edwin in his new decoration to his lady, saying—"There, madam, what think you now of my pupil? I don't believe there is a handsomer fellow in the regiment."—To confess the truth, Edwin's natural good person shewed to advantage in his military accoutrements, and which may be easily surmised by the answer of the lady, who, viewing him from head to foot with more than usual kindness, coincided in her husband's opinion; as did also Mrs. Delmer, who soon after joined the party. Thus treated with uncommon kindness by Mrs. Whitmore, and encouraged by general approbation, Edwin felt a self-satisfaction that he had never before experienced; and afterwards, when alone, as he passed the large glass in the drawing-room, could not avoid stealing a glance at his own figure, which

which appeared both new and delightful to him. At this moment his father's letter was presented him; its contents at once gave both pleasure and pain: he rejoiced at their happiness and success, but grieved at the uneasiness of Agnes, tenderness and gratitude for a moment obliterating ambition.—"I will leave all," said he, "to shew my affection; I will relinquish my aspiring hopes, and once more sink into a plain and humble farmer." As he spoke he raised his eyes from the letter to the mirror, and vanity again resumed her sway. "Fool that I was to leave the country! unless I had courage to pursue my fortune, it is but to taste of the cup of prosperity, and then to dash it from my lips! With what pleasure could I resume my labour, when I recollected how dear it had cost me, to drudge through the day in a coarse clumsy habit, and at night to return to a mere cottage, compared to the elegant mansions I am now accustomed to!

to! Agnes cannot require such a sacrifice—it would involve herself in the consequences of my folly.—No; rather let me redouble my efforts for advancement, which, once obtained, I will fly to claim her, make her partaker of my happiness, and force her to confess I took the most effectual means to shew my affection."

With such a resolution it may easily be conjectured what answer he returned to his father; it was affectionate and grateful, but at the same time expressed, in the warmest terms, his satisfaction at his change of fortune, his sanguine hopes of preferment; and finally, entreating him to console his beloved Agnes, and to assure her of his unalterable fidelity. For the farm, he denied all present or future claim to it; adding, "he hoped to gain both honour and fortune, without intruding on the little property so justly his brother's." Such was the purport of Edwin's answer; after which he joined

the

the family at dinner. Whitmore was that evening particularly engaged immediately after, and consequently the young ensign left with his lady and Mrs. Delmer. The behaviour of the former was striking, the utmost distance and *hauteur* were now changed into polite and attentive kindness; and being that evening engaged to accompany Mrs. Delmer to the play, after the removal of coffee, she said—"What say you, sister; shall we take this young soldier with us?"

Mrs. Delmer acquiesced with pleasure; and Edwin, at once astonished and delighted at such uncommon condescension, which he could only account for, by attributing it to the favourable alteration his person had undergone, bowed his thanks, and accompanied them with the highest pleasure.

Mrs. Whitmore was too much the *ton* for

for her party to pass unnoticed; her new *cecisbeo* attracted universal attention; nor was his vanity a little gratified by some whispers he heard addressed to the ladies respecting his fine person. The question of "Who is he?" was by no means so flattering, and gave him great embarrassment, until he heard Mrs. Whitmore reply—"A young gentleman, whose friends residing constantly in the country, have entrusted his introduction into life to Mr. Whitmore."

After the play they adjourned to Mrs. Delmer's, where they supped; and soon after Mrs. Whitmore and Edwin returned home. Whitmore was yet absent; and his lady, apparently in no haste to retire, proposed a game at piquet. Edwin was overwhelmed with shame: he simply knew it was a game at cards; but was totally unacquainted with that as any other, save a little of whist; and

that

that he had sometimes humoured farmer Bernard, by suffering him to beat him at cribbage or all-fours. Mortifying as it was, he was forced to confess his ignorance; at which Mrs. Whitmore laughing heartily, said—"Well, I must teach you then; but how, in the name of wonder, did you contrive to stupify your evenings in the country? Oh! now I remember Mr. Whitmore told me you had a true love, so I suppose you spent them with her, vowing eternal constancy, setting old age and ugliness at defiance; then trudging home at nine o'clock, you drank a glass of ale, asked your mother's blessing; and adieu till five next morning! Nay, never blush, Edwin, I am sure I have guessed right; but times are changed; what might do very well for Edwin Godwin, farmer, would be highly improper for a young officer, whose fortune depends on his person and his sword; but enough,

enough, take your cards, we will play for nothing to-night; next time I shall not let you off so easily."

Edwin was too much confused to reply; but the silence was short, for Mrs. Whitmore was too lively to suffer her companion to be thoughtful; and the time flew pleasantly till the clock struck two, when Edwin apologized for breaking so long on her rest; and soon after retired, Mrs. Whitmore saying, as he left her —"You have hitherto not considered me as your friend; dream to-night that I am truly such, and perhaps you may find your dreams realized."

Edwin retired too well satisfied to fall immediately asleep; and when he did, it was but to retrace the objects that during the day had afforded him such exquisite pleasure.

At an early hour Whitmore entered Edwin's apartment, and hastily awaken-

ed him. He had been up all night, and his dress in consequence was disordered; but the animation of his features was redoubled.—"Edwin," said he, "I could not retire without informing you of my success; I have all night been engaged at hazard, and have brought off two thousand pounds, notes and cash; and shall to-morrow receive four hundred pounds more, which makes the whole of my winnings two thousand four hundred. You shall accompany me when I go again, and try your fortune." Edwin congratulated his patron on his success, who soon after retired to rest, leaving Edwin possessed with an idea that, could he but be lucky enough to learn this charming science, his fortune was indubitably made.

Whitmore was true to his promise; he introduced Edwin the following evening, insisting that for all that night they should be partners of their success.

Edwin

Edwin would have declined it, but Whitmore was peremptory, for avarice was not among his vices; and fortune again favouring him, he, the next morning, presented Edwin with two hundred guineas, the moiety of what he had won the evening before.

Edwin now considered gambling a never-failing resource, and became indefatigable in learning its arts and mysteries, now playing on his own fund with various success, but for the general part successfully. Whenever he was engaged from Whitmore, he was a constant attendant on his lady, or Mrs. Delmer, flattered by their attention, and through their introduction universally well received. Mrs. Delmer he had ever regarded with gratitude and esteem, as her behaviour had been uniformly kind; but his sentiments for Mrs. Whitmore were of a different nature, he owed her no gratitude, nor could he in his heart es-

teem her; yet such was the beauty of her person, and the fascination of her manners, that he frequently could not avoid envying Whitmore the possession of so charming a woman; nay, initiated as he now became daily into life, he perhaps would not have scrupled to tell her so, had she appertained to any other man; but his heart was not yet sufficiently vitiated to attempt to debauch his friend's wife, though the lady by no means appeared inclined to cruelty; and Edwin was frequently obliged to fly a temptation so hard to be resisted.

Whitmore, in the mean time, was perpetually devising methods to get Emma into his power; for though the ardour of his passion was somewhat abated by the length of time he had been absent from her, yet her charms were not obliterated from his memory. He endeavoured to persuade Mrs. Delmer, and also Mrs. Whitmore, to invite her for a short

short space to town; but both ladies had received the prosposal so coldly, that, of necessity, he had been obliged to relinquish it.

Ten months had passed since Edwin left Inglewood; and in that short space he had so far improved, that little was wanting to constitute him a complete "man of the world." A few glasses of wine no longer discomposed his head; he could swear, and retire occasionally with a kind fair one, without feeling such acute remorse as he had at first experienced; though, to confess the truth, these errors, even yet, gave him some compunction, and were as constantly forsworn as committed; but the barrier of probity and truth once broken, the violation of an oath was a trifle, and therefore in this case frequently forfeited. He still maintained an uninterrupted correspondence with the family at Inglewood, and determined to visit them in a

short time, preparing presents, which he thought might be acceptable; that for Agnes was a miniature of himself in his uniform. One evening, having repaired to the gaming-house as usual, fortune was peculiarly unkind; he lost, doubled his bets, lost again, redoubled them, but in vain every effort, he was stripped of all his ready money, and before he left off, found himself considerably in debt. Whitmore had also been very unsuccessful, therefore he could not think of applying to him; and the stranger requested either the payment or an acknowledgment for the debt, which Edwin was necessitated to give, though he knew not how to discharge it.

Distressed what to do with himself, for it was not yet his hour to retire, and well knowing Whitmore and his lady were both abroad, he called at Mrs. Delmer's, whom he found at home and alone. She received him with her usual kindness; but

but gently upbraided him for so seldom visiting her, expressing her fears that he was not more properly engaged.

Edwin defended himself with great gallantry for so young a beginner; promising that hereafter she should have no reason to complain, except it was of his too frequently troubling her.

"You will do well," replied the lady; "it is time to know your friends. I have been indefatigable for your promotion, while you have hardly bestowed a thought on me; nay, I can with certainty assure you, that you will be raised on the first vacancy that happens in your regiment, which I have great reason to believe will not be long."

"Generous Mr. Whitmore!" exclaimed Edwin, "how shall I ever repay such unbounded obligations? But, my dear madam, when did he inform you of this? for he never mentioned it to me."

"It would be very strange if he should," replied the lady, "as he is totally unacquainted with it himself. In short, Edwin, not to keep you in suspense, your entrance into the army was my device, as I thought it the most speedy means of raising you to notice; my first design was never to let you know to whom you were obliged; but when I hear you are constantly engaged at the gaming-table, or else with other loose company, I think it but friendly to warn you of your danger, and to tell you I do not approve your conduct."

Edwin was too much astonished to reply for some moments, but threw himself at Mrs. Delmer's feet, where, as soon as he could articulate his thanks, he was profuse in his promises to act in a manner as should hereafter deserve her favour. As we easily believe what we wish, Mrs. Delmer was not inexorable. Edwin vowed his everlasting gratitude;

Mrs.

Mrs. Delmer in return promising her friendship and protection. In fine, the conversation became almost critical before they parted for the night, Edwin promising to breakfast with her the next morning.

On a review of what had passed, he was not now such a novice but to discover that he might at once step into an independent fortune without further trouble,—the only encumbrance a wife, and that too a handsome, amiable woman; but then to Agnes, though absence and dissipation had weakened his affection for her, yet his promise, as well as his inclination, bound him. What would his father say—William—every one? they would reprobate and despise him, while Agnes herself might perhaps die with grief. On the other side, what did gratitude demand? He now saw Mrs. Delmer as his best friend; through her he could discharge all his obligations, and realize his most flattering prospects.

 Such

Such was the conflict in Edwin's bosom when he went to rest; still honest enough to feel the pang of acting wrong, yet too weak to relinquish grandeur, though at the expence of probity, justice, and perhaps happiness.

CHAPTER XII.

Edwin waited on Mrs. Delmer at an early hour, and found her already prepared to receive him. After breakfast the discourse of the preceding evening was renewed; as before, it became unavoidably interesting; and Edwin, urged by ambition before he was aware, had prostituted vows of love at Mrs. Delmer's feet. The lady's partiality was too obvious to suffer her to reject them. In short, her affection made her regardless of what was due to herself, as ambition had

had made him of every sacred and moral tie, and a mutual promise was exchanged to be married the first opportunity, the lady stipulating that the marriage should be kept secret until his promotion took place. This resolution was too agreeable for Edwin to contend it; he renewed his vows; and by agreement it was at length resolved, that he should, even that very day, apply for a licence, and that their hands should be joined on the morrow. Whitmore was by no means to be apprised of this manœuvre, as he might endeavour to prevent it; which, though not in his power, might give them trouble. A momentary thought struck Edwin, that this concealment bore the appearance of ingratitude; but his conscience had become daily more accommodating; and when he reflected that he should soon have it in his power to repay all pecuniary obligations, he presently stifled the idea. The family at Inglewood gave him more pain.

—"I will see them once more," said he, "before my marriage is announced; after which I will hasten abroad until they are reconciled to the step I have taken, and Agnes is perhaps married.—D——n is in that thought, why did it interfere? I would sooner see her dead than in the arms of another."

Every thing being prepared, on the appointed morning Mrs. Delmer ordered her carriage to the Green Park, where she dismissed it with the servants, ordering them to return in a couple of hours. Here she, as appointed, met Edwin, who led her to a hackney coach, in which they soon reached the church, where she plighted him her true faith; for which he returned her a counterfeit, the real not being in his power to give.

The ceremony over, they separated; and she returned to her coach, which she ordered immediately home, where she

she found Edwin already waiting for her. The morning was passed in forming plans for the future. Mrs. Delmer was half inclined, in defiance of her first resolution, to declare her marriage immediately, that she might no more be separated from a man she tenderly loved; but Edwin was by no means agreeable to this alteration, for, though it would have gratified his pride to have proclaimed his alliance without delay to the world in general, yet he wished to protract the discovery for some time from Inglewood; therefore calling hypocrisy to his aid, he declared that, though to be perpetually with her was the first of his wishes, yet, for her honour, which was dearer than his own happiness, he determined to relinquish it until his promotion took place, which would render her condescension the less conspicuous; that in the mean time he should see her daily, and pass every hour with her he could steal from her brother.

"But

"But will not your constant visits," replied she, "give more disagreeable room for conjecture than even a public avowal? There is indeed one way: If your father would permit your sister Emma to pass some time with me, the visit then might be attributed to her. Suppose you write, and request it, informing your father of our marriage, and our reason for concealing it some short time?"

"My father," replied Edwin, "is so great an enemy to all concealment, that he would never consent to keep our secret, but immediately accuse me of deceit to Mr. Whitmore, and disclose it to him. As to Emma," continued he, "if you condescend to receive her, the best way will be for me to fetch her, as I am certain he will not otherwise suffer her to come."

This plan was by no means agreeable to Mrs. Delmer: she knew she had a beloved

beloved rival at Inglewood; and though Edwin had given her a proof that Agnes had lost her power over his heart, yet she feared, though he was irrevocably her own, to throw him into the way of so dangerous an object; she therefore dissented from this proposal; but Edwin, who ardently wished to see his friends once more while he could appear before them with the semblance of probity, pressed the business so strenuously, and declared himself so totally devoted to her, that at length he obtained her hard-wrung permission, provided he remained at the Forest no longer than two days.

Whitmore was at that moment announced. "Where the devil, Edwin," said he, "did you hide yourself all day yesterday? I sought you half over the town."

Edwin, who was now become an adept in

in falsehood, replied, that he had been engaged the day before with the army-agent, and likewise that morning; and calling on his return on Mrs. Delmer, she had detained him by a kind proposal of sending for Emma to pass a few months with her.

Few subjects could have given Whitmore so much satisfaction; he applauded his sister, and was on the point of offering to accompany Edwin; but prudence soon pointed out the folly of such a step, as it would only tend to awaken suspicion; he therefore simply congratulated him on the approaching meeting with his friends, adding, with a significant glance at his sister, "*A-propos*, you may, I think, as well wed Agnes, and bring her to town with you; there is no doubt but you will soon gain promotion: I have no patience to see you at liberty while I am fettered."

"Surely," replied Edwin, colouring deeply,

deeply, "it would be highly imprudent for me to marry.—I—I have no such intention."

"Well said, prudence," returned Whitmore, laughing; "and to confess the truth, though the girl is devilishly handsome, she has such an air of melancholy, that it is enough to give one the ague."

A sigh involuntarily escaped Edwin.—"Agnes," said he, "used to be reckoned a very cheerful girl."

"Perhaps so," replied Whitmore; "but when I saw her, you know she was on the point of being separated from her lover.—Fanny now is more to my taste, though perhaps not so critically beautiful; but your sister Emma is certainly much handsomer than either."

"Impossible that you should think so!" interrupted Edwin; "Agnes, past all dispute, is——

"Not so handsome as Emma," exclaimed

claimed Mrs. Delmer, hastily: "there is no comparison between them."

Edwin quickly saw his mistake; and gulping a provoking sigh that had nearly escaped him, he said—"We seldom can judge so perfectly of our relatives as those who have not been so accustomed to their features."

Whitmore now proposed to depart, and Edwin, as he left the apartment, followed him; but pretending to have left his glove, he returned, whispered a soft adieu to his bride, and promised to see her again as soon as he could get rid of Whitmore.

During the day Edwin was thoughtful and absent. Whitmore observed it, and inquired the cause. He complained of the headache, making it a pretence for retiring early; leaving Whitmore engaged at play, while himself kept his appointment with Mrs. Delmer.

At

At this meeting the subject of his intended journey to Inglewood was renewed, and was fixed to take place in two days. Mrs. Delmer gently whispered her fears that his attachment to Agnes was not totally effaced. He vowed to the contrary on her lips: in short, he strove to deceive; and she loved him too well not to believe an asseveration so congenial to her wishes.

He left her early, that no surmises might take place; but before his departure she presented him with a pocket-book, desiring him to peruse it at his leisure. On his return he retired immediately to his apartment, to examine the contents, and on the first leaf found the following words:—" By the will of the late Mr. Delmer, I cannot alienate any part of my jointure, which at my death returns to his family.—The ready money I possess is near sixteen thousand pounds

pounds in the funds, and may at pleasure be transferred. Enclosed are bills for one thousand, with which, my Edwin, discharge any obligation you may have contracted. All I ask in return is an undivided heart, and an affection as sincere as my own."

Edwin was transported: for some moments he thought himself perfectly happy, until "busy meddling memory" presented the disclosure of his marriage at Inglewood. This idea put all his happiness to flight; and replacing the notes, with a sigh he retired to bed. He was so totally engaged the next day with Whitmore, that he found it difficult to see his bride until evening, when he framed an excuse, that as he meant to set off early, he would sleep at an inn, that he might not disturb the family. He accordingly bid Mr. Whitmore adieu about nine o'clock, bearing with him a thousand

thousand remembrances to his parents, and receiving a strict charge to return in the course of the ensuing week.

From Whitmore he hastened to Mrs. Delmer, who received him with unfeigned satisfaction. With her he passed the remainder of the evening; then retired, not to rest as he told her, but to a chaise which he had in waiting, and in which he immediately set out on his journey.

CHAPTER XIII.

Edwin was too impatient to reach the Forest to spare either money or horses, and accordingly arrived on the third evening after his leaving London. As his friends were unacquainted with his journey, he promised himself great pleasure in taking them by surprise; therefore, leaving the chaise at some distance, walked up to the house. Edwin's courage and spirits, as he approached, appeared to forsake him: his legs could scarcely support his weight.—"I feel," cried he, with anguish, "that I am a villain! a mean perjured villain! and shall but contaminate by my presence this seat of innocence and virtue; yet they know it not, they think me honest as themselves; let me then, once more, enjoy

enjoy the pleasure of their artless caresses."

He had reached the kitchen window, and over the shutter saw the family sitting round the table, supper having just been removed, and replaced by a jug of ale. Agnes sat opposite to where he stood. He contemplated her with keen self-reproach—her pale and altered features. He heard Bernard drink his health, and saw the soft but expressive blue eyes of his daughter raised in silence, as if entreating the same of Heaven. He could bear no more, he forgot all but the present scene before him; and rushing into the house, stood before them. For a moment all gazed in silent wonder; but the next, all was rapture and confusion; the mugs and glasses were overset, the chairs thrown down; and surrounded on all sides, tears, congratulations, and embraces, bespoke his welcome. Agnes, fixed in her chair, appeared

appeared unable either to speak or weep. Tearing himself from the circling embraces of William and Fanny, he flew to her, and pressing her to his bosom, forgot every other object in the creation.—"Speak, my beloved Agnes," exclaimed he, "speak, and bless me with thy voice; I am but half welcome till I hear it from thee!"

"Ay, do, my girl," cried Bernard, "bid the good lad welcome; I'll wager he's come to claim thee for his own."

This simple speech affected the guilty Edwin like a stroke of lightning, and at once awoke him from his transport; his strength forsook him, and unable to support the almost-fainting Agnes, he was obliged to reseat her in her chair, for some moments remaining too much confused to reply. The general joy was however so great, that his disorder passed unnoticed. Agnes also began to recover her surprise, and at length tranquillity

quillity resumed her place in the mansion. Behold him now seated at his paternal board, between his venerable mother and Agnes, holding a hand of each, and alternately pressing them to his lips, Emma leaning over his chair, with one arm encircling his neck, while Godwin, Bernard, William, and Fanny, sat round contemplating the change a few months had made in his person.

"Zooks!" exclaimed Bernard, "how the boy is altered! I scarcely knew him when he came in! If I did not wonder what fine gentleman we had got; I thought to be sure he came from the Hall; but egad find me a likelier, come from where he will! What say you, Fanny? To be sure he is rather pale, but that don't signify."

"I think," replied Fanny, "that Edwin looks very well, though not better than I have seen him. If ever in my eyes he looked particularly so, it was on

Whitsuntide twelvemonth, on the day our parents gave their consent he should address Agnes, and promised in a year or two to unite them.—Never shall I forget his appearance when he came to tell her! we were seated under the great walnut-tree; he leaped the gate, flew to her, the utmost animation enlivening his features, his hair in disorder, curling round his face; he caught her in his arms, breathless with haste, while his eyes told his success before his speech returned."

"Pshaw," cried the old man, "thou wert always a fool, Fanny. As to his curls, when did you ever see a gentleman wear natural curls, except here and there a parson? Why, his head's powdered now and pinched; and as to his eyes, for aught I see, they are just the same as ever: eyes may do very well for girls to understand, but plain English for me. But, Agnes, what sayest thou? dost not like him better than before?"

"No,

"No, sir," answered Agnes, timidly; "Edwin, as a farmer, or a prince, will be equally dear to me; dress can make no difference, I love him for himself, not for his clothes."

"Did ever man see such foolish jades? Why, the wenches have no more pride than my grandmother's cat; but prithee, Emma, what think you?"

"Think!" repeated she, "why I think what I told you before, that I love him a thousand times better than ever, though he has not got his red coat on. I declare it was very ill-natured not to come in it."

Edwin now produced the picture he had brought for Agnes, who received it with a pleasure that found vent in tears; all admired it, even Godwin applauding the gallantry of his son.

"Why, to be sure," said Bernard, "it is very pretty, and very like; but I'll

lay you five shillings to fivepence, that Fanny will shew you one, ten times more *natural*, of William, in the course of a month or two."

Fanny's blushes immediately discovered the secret to Edwin.—"I thought, brother," said Godwin, with a smile, "you had promised me never to mention that subject."

"Why, no more I ever will among strangers, nor among friends neither, if it vexes her. God bless it! boy or girl, how I long to see it! Egad, I shall think I am grown a young man again as I dandle it in my arms."

Godwin, to put a stop to the discourse, began to question his son respecting his situation and future expectances. Edwin painted them in a most advantageous light, representing his promotion as certain in a short time. Mrs. Delmer he spoke of with the highest respect, saying, that her interest had been

been employed equally with her brother's; and that his present journey was principally at her instigation, to entreat that Emma might be permitted to pass a short time with her in London; that himself would see her daily; and accompany her into the country on her return, which he meant to do as soon as his promotion took place.

"Ah! that's right, my lad," replied Bernard; "kill two birds with one stone; bring down Emma, and take back Agnes. Is it not so, Edwin?"

"Agnes is dearer to me than life!" exclaimed Edwin; "and I can never know happiness without her; but say, my dear sir, do you grant Mrs. Delmer's request in respect to Emma?"

"I cannot spare her, indeed I cannot," cried Mrs. Godwin; "to part with any more of my children would kill me."

Emma could not restrain her tears; she had long since given up all hopes of

Mrs. Delmer's promised invitation, and indeed had almost forgotten it; but now, to find she remembered her, and that it only depended on her parents' consent, she knew not how to bear the disappointment, particularly when she contemplated the improvement that (in her eyes) had taken place in Edwin, and had no doubt but her own might be equally successful.

William looked at her reproachfully, and apparently was on the point of expressing his thoughts on the occasion, had not a beseeching look from Fanny at once checked his design, and softened his features into a smile.

"Emma," said her father, "do you grieve because your mother loves you too well to part with you? Is that a requital for her tenderness?"

"No, sir," replied she, weeping; "I love my mother and yourself beyond the whole

whole world; but my affection for Edwin for a moment overcame every other consideration, and I wished to accompany him."

This conciliating speech reconciled all parties; and they continued conversing far beyond the usual hour. Edwin was already too deeply plunged in guilt to extricate himself; he therefore determined to enjoy the present hour at all events, though it was not to be done without additional hypocrisy and falsehood; he had therefore recourse to both; and when his father, who observed he had given no direct answer in regard to Agnes, again pressed the subject, he replied, with assumed boldness—"On my promotion I will return, and make her all my own."

In the morning, William, who was obliged to go out on business, asked Edwin to accompany him. If possible, he would have excused himself, for he dreaded both the penetration and affec-

tion of his brother; he could not however deny, and therefore determined to be doubly on his guard.—" Edwin," said William, " I cannot express the pain I have felt on your account; my father, too, I am sure, has been equally unhappy; though I carefully concealed whatever I thought would increase it. Your entrance into the army was, I am convinced, totally repugnant both to his feelings and principles. I had once hopes, my brother, that you would have been sickened of grandeur and folly, and returned to the bosom of your family, for you appeared dissatisfied; whence then this alteration? are your new friends changed, or are you so?"

" Whatever change may have taken place," replied Edwin, " at least my affection for my family has undergone no variation. When I first went, unaccustomed to the world, I perhaps judged too harshly; at present I view things through a different medium: to live with

with the world, it is, in some measure, necessary to give into its manners."

"It may be necessary," returned William; "but, believe me, I would prefer the meanest situation, with liberty of word and action, to affluent slavery, however dignified. I once thought your opinions the same; but say, Edwin, in adopting their manners, is it not also frequently necessary to adopt their vices, or at least countenance them?"

"We certainly are not obliged to adopt them. People, William, accustomed to the great world, have undoubtedly fewer prejudices than those who live secluded from it, yet may possess both probity and honour."

"From a long continuation of giving into manners, we insensibly imbibe them; and if those manners are not pure, may I not tremble for my brother's morals? Sacred to me are even the prejudices that tend to the general good. You perhaps, Edwin, are divested of your

 former

former prejudices; but are you the happier, or more virtuous?"

Edwin could not repress a sigh.

"As we are alone," continued William, "I frankly speak my fears and wishes, though, except to yourself, they shall ever be buried in my own bosom. Nothing is wanting to complete my felicity but your company; yet not for myself alone, but for your sake, do I wish you could relinquish these hateful hopes of wealth that have lately possessed you. Oh! Edwin, you know not the bliss of possessing a tender, gentle companion, in whose bosom you can repose all your joys and sorrows, or you would not hesitate to give up all, take Agnes to your arms, and fix your future home at Inglewood, where, surrounded by your family in your youth, and in your age by your children, you would live respected, and die beloved, after experien-

cing

cing as much happiness as falls to the lot of mortals. Do not, my dear brother, decline it—it may hereafter be impossible."

"It is impossible!" exclaimed Edwin, involuntarily.

"Impossible!" repeated William, starting; "impossible, Edwin!"

"Yes, impossible!" replied Edwin, recovering himself. "Would you have me return Mr. Whitmore's favours with ingratitude; and when I have almost succeeded to the height of my wishes, relinquish them? No, William, it is indeed impossible. Had I, perhaps, never left the country, it had been as well; but as it is, I am determined to pursue my fortune."

William sighed, and withdrew his suit, walking some short way in silence, until they were joined by Mr. Godwin, when Edwin's task was renewed by the parental admonitions of his father.

Thus, more and more in need of hypocrisy, he plunged yet deeper in falsehood; and though his heart stung him as he proceeded, his face was become so accommodating as not to have disgraced an adept.

While the male part of the family was absent, Emma was endeavouring to influence Agnes to second her views, in persuading her mother to permit her to accompany Edwin to town; nor was the proposal at all ungrateful to Agnes; she loved Emma, and would have done any thing to give her pleasure. In this case she had also another incentive; her beloved Edwin would have an affectionate sister near him, and herself a friend, ever mindful of their mutual interests. Agnes proposed consulting Fanny, who was the darling of her mother-in-law; but Emma declined it.—"No," said she; "William I know is against it, and she has no will but his. I saw him frown

last

last night; he was never like other young people, and therefore can be no judge of their feelings."

"Nay, now you speak too petulantly," replied Agnes; "William, I am convinced, possesses a most susceptible heart; and, though I love all our family equally, yet I look up to him with an esteem and reverence I know not how to express, and which I feel for no one else, except your father."

Mrs. Godwin at that moment entered; and, after some little conversation, Agnes, to oblige her friend, said—"Indeed, my dear madam, I could have wished that our Emma had obtained your permission to have accompanied Edwin to town. He must, I am sure, pass many heavy hours, which Emma's company would help to beguile him of. He will, doubtless, come when Fanny gives us a little one, and she could then have returned with him; in the mean time, I would

would have been doubly assiduous that you might not miss her. Besides, Ed win looked as if it would have greatly obliged him; perhaps he fears Mrs. Delmer may think us ungrateful."

"My good girl," replied Mrs. Godwin, "Emma well knows it pains me to refuse any thing that gives her satisfaction. Edwin's absence has caused me constant uneasiness; yet, as she is so earnest, I know not; I will consider—I will consult her father."

"Thanks, thanks, my dear mother," cried Emma, in a transport; "I only ask until Edwin returns."

"Your thanks are too warm on this subject to be pleasing, Emma," replied Mrs. Godwin, gravely; "I flatter myself, neither Fanny nor Agnes would express so much joy on the thoughts of leaving me." With these words Mrs. Godwin quitted the apartment, before either her daughter or Agnes could reply.

"How

"How cruel!" cried Emma; "I protest I don't think I'll go now, though even she should give me leave."

"I cannot advise you," replied Agnes; "it distresses me to see her uneasy; and were she my mother, I would not go to London on such conditions, though my heart was disengaged, and I was sure to be made a queen when I arrived there."

"Oh, Heaven, what an idea!" exclaimed Emma, the seriousness vanishing from her features in an instant. "Consider in such a case how soon you could make her amends—power, grandeur, wealth."

"They would not all compensate," said Agnes, "for my breach of duty, nor yet call back the tears she had shed for my absence." Fanny here joined them, and the conversation ceased.

At dinner, Edwin informed them how extremely he was limited in point of time; promising, however, to return at the

the period Agnes had before mentioned, and again renewing his entreaty concerning Emma. In the afternoon he found himself alone with Agnes; and, though it was what he ardently wished, yet, when obtained, conscious duplicity for some moments rendered him unable to articulate a syllable. At length, regardless of all but the present, he renewed his vows of everlasting truth, forgetting, as he sealed them on her lips, that he had already prostituted them at the altar. The guileless lamb is but ill prepared to withstand the subtilty of the serpent. Agnes's words were the pure dictates of uncorrupted innocence; she avowed her affection, and promised to follow the unworthy object, in wealth or poverty, throughout the world. His expected promotion, and the advice of Mr. Whitmore, were the excuses fabricated to delay his marriage. He affected to deplore them; nay, at that moment he perhaps did deplore the fatal bar his

pride

pride and avarice had everlastingly placed between himself and Agnes, as he contemplated her beauty and innocence, and reflected that he might with honour have possessed them, respected by his friends, and applauded by his own heart.

In the meanwhile Mrs. Godwin had consulted with her husband respecting Emma. He by no means approved of her going to London; but the subject had been so warmly pressed by Edwin, and so earnestly desired by Emma, that at length he gave his consent, on condition she should return at the appointed time.

The next morning Edwin and Emma prepared to depart; the good farmer first drawing his son aside, and strongly recommending him to be careful of his sister; he then drew out his pocket-book, and presenting him with some notes, said—" My dear boy, your obligations

gations to Mr. Whitmore are great, as he has assiduously endeavoured to serve you according to your own ideas of happiness; your pecuniary obligation must however be painful; he advanced you a hundred pounds—with these repay it; the money I can well spare, I have reserved it for this purpose, therefore no words, receive it as freely as I give it."

Edwin would fain have declined this present, but could by no means without declaring the truth; he therefore was necessitated to put it in his pocket, though with no very pleasurable sensations, every fresh instance of affection he received from his deluded family adding a pang to his bosom.—"Accursed wealth!" exclaimed he, as his father left him, "that first induced me to forsake the paths of rectitude; and doubly accursed pride, that tempted me to sacrifice both probity and happiness!—Ah, Agnes! thou wilt be sufficiently revenged; misery must be my portion if I lose thee,

yet

and yet how shall I obtain thee, without plunging still further in deceit and villany!"

William at that moment entered. Aomng a thousand kind wishes, he recommended him to watch carefully over his sister Emma.—"I fear for her," said he, "because her heart is disengaged, and her natural thoughtlessness may lead her to fix it on some unworthy object."

All was now prepared, and the travellers departed, bearing with them the ardent wishes of their friends for their speedy return.

CHAPTER XIV.

EMMA soon dried the tears she shed at parting from her parents, and would have entered into conversation with her brother; but he, lost in thought, was not sufficiently collected to amuse or yet be amused. He had planted the seeds of discontent and remorse in his own bosom, and they every moment gained fresh strength; the sight of Agnes had revived his half-extinguished passion, and made him determine to possess her, though at the loss of that wealth for which he had sacrificed all those ties which render life desirable. His marriage, he well knew, could not be long concealed; it was therefore necessary that on whatever he determined he should be speedy, as that once declared, he, in all

all probability, must take an eternal farewell of his native home.

Fearful that Emma might divulge any thing relative to his promise of returning to Inglewood to espouse Agnes, he entreated her to be silent on the subject, as it must at least be kept secret some time; both Mr. Whitmore and his sister having dissuaded him from such a step, though he had forborne to mention it, fearful of giving Agnes uneasiness.

On the third day they reached Barnet, where, to their great surprise, they found Mr. Whitmore and his sister waiting for them. How flattering this compliment to the unexperienced heart of Emma! Whitmore could not conceal his pleasure; it was expressed in every word and action, and sparkled in his eyes. Mrs. Delmer's satisfaction was scarcely inferior, though obliged to dissemble

semble her tenderness; she however endeavoured to make herself amends, by representing to herself the pleasure Edwin would doubtless experience at this proof of her affection and attention; but she in vain sought to find it expressed either in his eyes or words; the first were averted from her; the latter cold, distant, and merely complimentary; love had stifled gratitude in his bosom, and he could now only regard her as one who had deprived him for ever of his dearest hopes.

The party reached town in Mr. Whitmore's carriage, and were set down at Mrs. Delmer's, where an excellent supper was provided. Emma had never before seen any thing so completely elegant; for though since Mrs. Palmer had fixed her residence among them, Emma, with her parents, had frequently dined there, yet her table, though plentiful, was remarkably simple; and, though served

served with peculiar neatness, was totally devoid of show and parade: the repository of her silver was not the sideboard, but the pockets of the poor; the former therefore was but thinly furnished, while the latter were frequently replenished sufficiently to procure all the necessaries of life.

Emma, naturally volatile, was charmed with all around her; no cloud, save one, obscured her satisfaction. Whitmore was married; that indeed cost her a sigh, and she dreaded, she knew not why, the sight of his wife. Edwin also became more cheerful; he contemplated all around as his own, when he should please to acknowledge his right, and Ambition once more began to resume her seat in his bosom. In short, before the evening closed, all parties appeared perfectly satisfied.

Mrs. Delmer's view in sending for

Emma

Emma to town, was to insure to herself, without scandal, the company of her beloved Edwin; but, although it gratified her in that point, it by no means answered her expectation, as Whitmore ever accompanied him; at home he was of the party, and abroad their constant escort; ever ready by the side of Emma to render those nameless attentions which insensibly steal on the female heart.

Emma, though she had at the Forest been always accustomed to be perfectly neat and well dressed, yet had never possessed any of those useless appendages that distinguish well-dressed women in great towns, but with all of which Mrs. Delmer soon supplied her; for as she now, in some measure, considered her as a sister, she would have been gratified to see her eligibly married, and was therefore anxious to make her appearance as respectable as possible. Emma

ma had always been partial to Mrs. Delmer; but this kindness redoubled that sensation, and in a letter which she wrote to Agnes, and sent inclosed in one of Edwin's, she said, after expressing the highest satisfaction at her situation—"Indeed, my dear girl, it is impossible to describe to you the kindness of Mrs. Delmer; I am equally well dressed as herself, and accompany her to every public place, where I cannot frequently avoid hearing compliments on my person, enough to make me vain.

"Last night I heard a gentleman at the opera say to his companion, that my complexion was too glowing for a *blonde*, and too fair for a *brunette*, but a happy mixture of both. You may be sure I did not rightly comprehend this, until Mrs. Delmer, who likewise overheard it, explained it to me. I am convinced myself that I look much better; for dress, Agnes, makes a great alteration: my feet in silk shoes are not like

the same; they appear almost too small to bear me; and my arms seem quite a different shape, from the addition of a beautiful pair of bracelets, which Mr. Whitmore presented me. Edwin is equally favoured as myself; and I can assure you, when in his regimentals, I think I scarcely ever saw so handsome a man! I have been introduced to Mrs. Whitmore; but indeed, Agnes, I can't love her; she is very handsome; but so hatefully proud, that I am uncomfortable whenever we meet; for she stares at me with such contemptuous expression on her countenance, that I am ready to sink. Oh, Agnes, how I pity Mr. Whitmore! how happy might his wife be were she so inclined! for he is really one of the most amiable men I ever saw; but he is so unhappy at home, that he is almost perpetually with his sister.

"Not a word of this, my dear Agnes, to any one, not even to your sister Fanny; you know my parents and William

liam would say I should be ruined with pride and hateful vanity; and perhaps send for me immediately home; and that, before the promised time, would break the heart of your

"Emma Godwin."

Emma had, on her first arrival, as she informed Agnes, been introduced to Mrs. Whitmore; but that lady had treated her with the most forbidding distance; nay, even Edwin appeared lately to have lost the ground he had formerly gained in her good graces; to confess the truth, the lady had felt herself piqued at the particular attention he had lately paid to Mrs. Delmer, and had been at some pains to learn how frequent his visits were; and that he often staid until a very late hour; not, however, of a temper for such trifles to give her uneasiness, she immediately transferred the transient spark of inclination

she had felt for Edwin to a captain in the guards, called Darleville.

Notwithstanding the charge Edwin had received, both from his father and William, to be careful of Emma, he was too much employed in his own pursuits, and devising means to get Agnes in his power, to pay her any particular attention: to the gallantry of Whitmore he was too much accustomed to think it any thing particular; and as long as his sister was under the protection of Mrs. Delmer, he had not the most distant idea of danger.

One evening Whitmore joined them in apparent disorder; his wife, regardless as he was of her, had forced him to notice her conduct, as it became public enough to be censured in a paragraph in the newspaper. Mrs. Delmer endeavoured to palliate it; while Emma in her

her heart reprobated her conduct; and dropped a tear on the vexation Whitmore experienced from being so unhappily married.

At that instant Mrs. Delmer's lawyer was announced: he came on business relative to a suit she had lately gained, and to pay into her hands a considerable sum.

" For Heaven's sake!" cried Whitmore, " do not bring him here; I cannot at present bear the loquacity of the law; besides, it is the old rascal that drew my infernal marriage-articles. Prithee, my dear sister, see him below."

Mrs. Delmer readily acquiesced; and leaving her brother with Emma, attended her lawyer.

Both remained for some time silent: at length Whitmore said—" You pity

 me,

me, enchanting Emma; you feel for your unhappy friend; ah! why did we not meet when I might with honour have offered you my hand and fortune? nay, turn not from me, I cannot bear your displeasure, tied as I am to one whom my soul justly abhors, and doomed to love where I can never hope a return! yet you wept for me, Emma," continued he, sinking at her feet; "you do not hate me—you will, I know, pardon even the frenzy of this moment."

"For Heaven's sake, sir, rise—nay, Mr. Whitmore, I entreat—consider, should Mrs. Delmer, or my brother, surprise you in this posture——"

"What if they should?" replied he, warmly; "they will not hear me disavow my love; no, they shall hear me proclaim it—glory in it. Mrs. Whitmore's conduct will entitle me to a divorce; then say, Emma, you will not refuse me, when in my power to lay my fortune at your feet?"

"I cannot

"I cannot bear this!" replied Emma, weeping; "I will return immediately to Inglewood."

"Go, then," said he, "leave me to despair; yet, Emma, you may hereafter repent not having spoken comfort to a man who idolizes you!"

"Alas!" replied Emma, "what comfort can I speak? If my good wishes could make you happy, you would have no reason to complain."

"Charming angel!" exclaimed he, rising, and kissing her hand. "I will no more alarm you, but conceal my sufferings in my own breast; time and fortune may perhaps relieve them."

"For Heaven's sake then drop the discourse; your emotion distresses me."

"Your desires shall ever be commands," replied he, resuming his usual serenity. "Pardon my behaviour this night, and I will offend no more."

Whitmore was true to his word, or

 at

at least for that time; he was fearful of alarming Emma, should he press the subject farther, and, fully satisfied with having broken the ice, determined to leave the rest to time and continued assiduities.

When Mrs. Delmer returned, both parties were tolerably composed, and Edwin joining them: soon after, they all adjourned to the play.

Two months had thus passed with Emma in a continual succession of amusements, when Edwin received a letter from William, informing him that his beloved Fanny had made him the happy father of a lovely boy, concluding with pressing his return with Emma to be present at the christening.—Neither Whitmore nor Mrs. Delmer appeared to approve this invitation: the former, looking at Emma with supplicating tenderness, said—"Do, Edwin, devise some means

means to excuse your return; surely a few months might be allowed your sister: I was in no such haste to quit Inglewood."

"Indeed," replied Mrs. Delmer, "I think the request very ill-timed; Edwin cannot get leave of absence for more than a few days, and surely it is not worth while taking such a journey for that period."

"I have obtained a fortnight," returned Edwin, with a pleasure he could not entirely suppress. "I expected this event, and was prepared for it; for my father would hold it unpardonable were I not to attend."

Mrs. Delmer appeared so highly dissatisfied at this information, that Edwin, after having accompanied Whitmore home, again returned. Mrs. Delmer was still up, but Emma had retired to her apartment. He now exerted all his influence to persuade her of the necessity

of his paying this one visit to Inglewood, and which he firmly declared should be the last, unless accompanied by herself; that though he knew his father would be highly displeased, he would venture to leave Emma, hoping that, in a short time, he should gain promotion, and all restraint be naturally removed.

This discourse was mingled with so many caresses and protestations, that at length Mrs. Delmer consented, though against her real inclination. She had not a wish that he should think jealousy prompted her refusal, though inwardly determined to declare her marriage in a short time, whether he gained preferment or otherwise.

The permission granted, he left her, and returned home, determined to set out on his journey the first moment he decently could. He ardently wished to be at the Forest, and as this was in all probability

probability his last opportunity to strike some bold stroke that might give him possession of Agnes—"I know," said he, as he reflected on the subject, "her heart is entirely mine, and in some happy, unguarded moment, could I but gain possession of her person, I might afterwards be able to divest her of her prejudices, and persuade her to share my fortune. My pay, if I gain preferment, will amply supply us: and for Mrs. Delmer's wealth, let her keep it—accursed be the hour in which I was infatuated enough to barter happiness for gold!"

The next morning Emma was consulted respecting her continuing in town, and very readily gave into a concerted falsehood, that Edwin should excuse her absence under a pretence of Mrs. Delmer's ill health; and that she particularly entreated her company some time longer. Whitmore came in during this discourse; he expressed the utmost pleasure that

Emma was not yet to leave them; he had the whole night been revolving on some means to prevent it, and was delighted to find the business settled to his hand. Edwin's departure was fixed to take place in three days, the intervening time being dedicated to pleasure and dissipation.

Emma's conduct was weak, without being intentionally wicked. She rather suffered than approved the behaviour of Whitmore; she pitied him on account of his wife; and that sentiment, strengthened by the affection she undoubtedly felt for him, induced her not to repulse him, as she ought properly to have done. Mrs. Delmer could not at times avoid observing the attention which Whitmore paid to Emma; but totally employed by her own passion for Edwin, and naturally unsuspicious, the idea of seduction never entered her imagination; attributing his behaviour, therefore, mere-

ly

ly to his usual gallantry, she thought it not necessary to be noticed; for as Emma was perfectly apprised of his situation, she could not think her in danger; and, to mention the subject to Edwin, would be only awakening suspicions that had perhaps no real foundation, and the cause of which would naturally cease as soon as Emma was removed.

Edwin, at the appointed time, set off for Inglewood; and on his arrival there, was received with the utmost pleasure by the whole family; William presenting him his infant son, with as much exultation as if he had been heir to a diadem. The absence of Emma at first greatly displeased her parents; but Edwin's excuses of Mrs. Delmer's ill health were so adroitly fabricated, that they could not fail being admitted. The venerable Mrs. Godwin at length observing that, though it would have increased her satisfaction for Emma to have been present

on so joyful an occasion, yet she should have been sorry for her to have quitted Mrs. Delmer under such circumstances.

Thus situated were the innocent family at Inglewood, seated round the social board, recounting old tales of past pleasures, and looking forward in happy expectancy of new ones. Edwin was alone an exception; he looked back with disgust, and forward with horror; but he had gone too far to recede, and therefore boldly determined not to be half a villain.

"I think," said Godwin, looking round him, "that I want nothing but the presence of Emma to call myself perfectly happy; we shall miss her cheerful humour at our christening. Mrs. Palmer being absent too is another misfortune; however, many are the blessings we enjoy; to repine at what we have not, is to be unworthy those we possess."

The

The discourse then turned on Mrs. Palmer, who had for some time past been at Bristol on business relative to her late uncle; all joined in her praise, wishing they had been favoured with her presence, as she was by her own desire to be godmother to the young stranger.

Three days after, began the preparations for the ceremony; the relations and friends were invited; and as some lived too far distant to return the same evening, Bernard's house was aired, and the beds prepared for their reception. Geese, fowls, turkies, and pigs, were slaughtered, pies and plumb-puddings prepared, the ale and made-wines tapped; and, in short, all that could contribute to the festivity of the day, which was fixed for the Sunday following, the month of Fanny's lying-in being then complete, and herself thought able to accompany them to church.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XV.

WHILE all parties at Inglewood were busy in preparing for the christening, Whitmore's mind was equally, though less innocently employed; he had now an opportunity, such as, in all probability, he might never again obtain, to address Emma; her brother was absent, and Mrs. Delmer, for some reason which he did not give himself the trouble to endeavour to develop, was frequently engaged for several hours. At another time, it might have excited his curiosity, as she had, to his knowledge, sold out a considerable sum, which she had in the funds, the very day after Edwin's departure; but his mind was too much occupied about Emma for any other subject to engage him. Mrs. Whitmore's con-

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duct too became daily more glaringly abandoned, and he was endeavouring to procure a legal separation; for as to a divorce, whatever he said to Emma, he had no wish for it, could he avoid it with honour, as her fortune was very large, and would greatly straiten his finances to repay; besides, it certainly was in the lady's power to recriminate; in which case all his attempts would prove fruitless.

In the mean time he profited by the opportunities his sister's absence gave him with Emma; he was for ever offending, and as frequently begging pardon; yet constantly ending with vowing to be only hers; that the conduct of his wife had broken every tie between them; that the law would soon pronounce it void; and he should be the happiest of men.

The unthinking Emma had suffered

this

this tale to be so frequently repeated, that it insensibly became less offensive to her ear; and, as she really loved Whitmore, could not avoid wishing the event he appeared to desire so ardently, might speedily take place.

One afternoon, after Whitmore had passed the whole morning with Emma, Mrs. Delmer came home in particular high spirits; and, after dinner, sat down and wrote a letter, which was addressed, to Emma's great amazement, to her brother Edwin at Inglewood. Emma was at that moment alone with Mrs. Delmer, who, perceiving marks of curiosity on her features, said—"I have been writing to your brother, Emma, on a subject that at present I cannot disclose; but which, I am convinced, will give you pleasure. I shall send my letter by this night's post; and, on his answer, which, by the way I expect he will

bring

bring himself, shall be able to treat you with a surprise."

Without farther explanation she rang for a servant—delivered the letter to be put in the post—and ordered tea. Whitmore had left them soon after Mrs. Delmer's return, with a promise to join them early in the evening; it was now, however, far beyond his usual time; but Mrs Delmer was too much accustomed to such disappointments for them to give her any great surprise. Emma, on the contrary, felt uneasy, though she endeavoured to conceal it.—Whitmore had that morning, when alone with her, proposed to pass the whole evening there; and in such promises he had ever before been strictly punctual.

It was near eleven before he joined them, and then apparently discomposed. He pressed Emma's hand between his, and turning suddenly to Mrs. Delmer,

said

said—"Is it true, madam, that you are married to Edwin?"

For an instant the lady was too confused to reply. At length she answered —"Suppose it is so, sir, who has a right to control me?"

"Not I, by my soul," replied he, "nor would I if I could; but surely I might have been trusted; it had better have been disclosed by you, than by my wife's gallant, Darleville, in a public coffee-house."

"Merciful God! my brother Edwin married!" exclaimed Emma.

"I have neither acted by Edwin or you, madam," said Whitmore, "in a manner to make secrecy needful. You are the undoubted mistress of yourself and fortune; but Edwin, methinks, should have consulted his friends."

"Agnes will die with grief," sobbed Emma; "he has treated her cruelly."

"At least, Emma," interrupted Mrs. Delmer, "I expected your approbation. Do

Do you think your brother could have married better? I first procured him the commission, and have by purchase now got him promoted; that has been the business which lately has so totally employed me, and that will be completed to-morrow. We agreed to keep our marriage secret till that event took place, and I have this night written to inform him that all restraint is removed."

"You cannot but be sensible," replied Emma, "that I rejoice in my brother's good fortune; and must indeed myself be unworthy your kindness, did I not feel both affection and gratitude for you; yet, when I reflect on the confusion this will occasion at Inglewood, I protest it frightens me; I fear they will think I was in the secret."

"Suppose you were," answered Mrs. Delmer. "Your father will surely be satisfied with the prudence of his son's choice?"

"My father, you well know, madam, is extremely partial to Bernard's daugh-

ters;

ters; and though he will undoubtedly be sensible of the honour you have done us, will resent the insult offered to Agnes."

"Farmers are plenty enough in your country," replied Mrs Delmer; "she will soon supply her loss. For the present, however, let the business rest; I am perfectly satisfied with what I have done, and trust Edwin is the same."

Vexed as Whitmore really felt, he was too politic to quarrel with his sister at a moment he regarded so critical in his success with Emma; he therefore only replied—"You say well, let it rest: I again repeat, I do not blame you, except for your want of confidence in me; however, let even that pass, I will lay the fault to love, and excuse it; for, perhaps, in that same case I might have been equally blameable."

Mrs. Delmer was astonished at her brother's moderation, while Emma was charmed with his goodness in thus calm-

ly

ly bearing so unequal a marriage in respect to fortune; and though in her heart she could not avoid lamenting the falsehood of Edwin to Agnes, yet her pride was gratified to find herself so greatly allied. Edwin's behaviour, when last at Inglewood, confounded her; that he was married at that time she could hardly believe; yet she had been almost constantly with Mrs. Delmer since she returned to town with him, and had no reason to imagine their union had taken place since that period. In short, the more she thought on this subject, the more she was bewildered; and soon after Whitmore retired, withdrew to her apartment.

Mrs. Delmer was engaged early the next morning to conclude the business she had before mentioned; therefore, after taking a hasty breakfast with Emma, during which little discourse passed, she left her.

Edwin's

Edwin's marriage now entirely employed Emma's thoughts; his reason for desiring her not to mention to Mrs. Delmer what had been proposed at the Forest, was now accounted for; her heart revolted at his duplicity, while she pitied and wept for Agnes.—"Yet, after all," said she mentally, "the temptation was indeed hard to resist—grandeur, wealth, and pleasure. Heigho, I myself once thought Inglewood the finest place in the world; at present how different! I know it to be only a mean inconsiderable spot, with a few scattered houses, for the most part covered with thatch, and am almost ashamed to say I was born there! I am sure I shall never be able to endure it now; therefore how can I so much wonder at Edwin? Poor fellow, he is at once to be condemned and pitied!"

These deliberations were broken upon by the sudden entrance of Whitmore,

whose

whose whole appearance announced that some extraordinary event had taken place. He threw himself in a chair, and after some moments silence, his eyes fixed on the astonished Emma, he said, taking her hand —"I have sometimes flattered myself that you regarded me with kindness, Emma; now is the time to prove it. I have this morning fought with Darleville, who, not content with the injury done me with that infamous woman that bears my name, but whom I despise too much to seek revenge, he last night dared to speak disrespectfully of my sister and yourself; but his life will repay the insult—I have left him past hope. The friend who accompanied me already thinks me on my way to Calais, where he wishes me to stay till I learn the event; but I cannot go; I will sooner await the worst than leave you."

"Great God!" exclaimed Emma, trembling, "let me conjure you to fly this instant; every moment increases

your danger. Would to Heaven you had never known us! My brother's imprudence has, I fear, involved you in this trouble."

"My proofs are, I have no fear, strong enough to procure a divorce; pardon, then, Emma, a proposal which nothing but the necessity of the moment should force me to make. Would you," continued he, throwing himself at her feet, "nobly shew yourself above vulgar prejudices, and condescend to accompany me, I will go when and where you please, and the first moment in my power, make you mine for ever; but I cannot, will not, quit you, though death itself should be the consequence. I ask no return to my affection but what modesty may grant, until I have a legal right; oh! then, my beloved girl, for once step over those narrow bounds of cold prudence, and shew your friendship; your brother is already the husband of my sister, and you are the chosen of my

heart;

heart; speak, then, my love; shall I owe my life to your kindness, or will you suffer me to be taken at your feet?"

"Oh! Mr. Whitmore, what do you ask?" replied Emma, weeping; "consider my parents, my brother."

"Your brother Edwin, however, cannot blame you; it is in his quarrel, unkindly as he has treated me, that I have incurred this misfortune; and for your parents, when I present myself as their son, all animosities will cease: resolve then, my Emma, and let me owe a debt to love, which cold duty alone never yet formed an idea of."

At this moment a loud knock at the door alarmed Emma.—"Oh! hasten, hasten," she cried; "perhaps you may be sought for even here! fly, or my apprehensions for you will kill me."

The cause of Emma's alarm was Whitmore's valet. He came to press his master's departure; he said he had a chaise in waiting, and had just heard

that Darleville could not survive the day.

"Begone," replied Whitmore, "I care not; I am not ready; I am prepared to meet the worst."

The man appeared surprised, and would have ventured to expostulate; but Whitmore interrupting him, again commanded his absence, in a voice that demanded obedience.

Whitmore still persisted in pressing the alarmed and half-wavering Emma to accompany him. For some time she only answered with her tears; at length she said—"Let us consult Mrs. Delmer; I will be guided by her."

Whitmore, who dreaded nothing more than the return of Mrs. Delmer, however replied, taking out his watch—"Well, be it so; but what time do you expect her?"

"Oh!—no—no!" exclaimed Emma,

"it is impossible; she will not return till near dinner-time, and your safety demands that you depart this instant."

"My safety, or even my life, is to me of no value. Independent of you, Emma, therefore, I will wait the return of my sister; yet has she not shewn, by her choice of your brother, that she thinks a small share of the world's opinion is worth sacrificing to obtain happiness?"

"Ah!" sighed Emma, "but she is married!"

"Well, my love, and shall we not also be married as soon as possible? Even with all the bigotry that country-education has implanted in your mind, you must allow, that a woman who has acted so shamefully as Mrs. Whitmore, is no longer in the eye of Heaven, or the world, my wife. My marriage with her was merely a joining of hands; ours, Emma, will be a union of hearts. To ease your delicate scruples, am I not content to wait for all the formalities

of law and the jargon of priest-craft? though neither, Emma, can make me more securely yours, let me only, my love, have to boast hereafter, that you nobly shewed your affection in the hour of my danger, and accompanied in his exile a man who would glory to place you on a throne."

Emma, weak and irresolute, knew not how to consent, yet feared to deny; she loved Whitmore too well, for his safety not to be dear to her; duty for a while indeed struggled with passion; but Emma's mind was too feeble to bear the conflict.

Whitmore saw his advantage, and pressing his suit with redoubled ardour, prevailed, in an unhappy moment, on the infatuated Emma to demolish the fair structure of Virtue her parents had so many years been endeavouring to rear in her heart, by weakly yielding to accompany

accompany him. Delighted with his success, he hurried her instantly to the chaise which he had in waiting, ordering the postboy to use the utmost speed.

Had Whitmore given Emma time to reflect, it is probable she might have escaped the destruction that awaited her; but her sensibility awakened for the safety of the man she loved—no friend near to advise, or snatch her from the impending ruin, she forgot all but his danger, regardless of the dagger she was striking into the bosom of her parents, or the never-dying anguish she was implanting in her own!

They had hardly reached the end of the first stage, when, even though supported by the encircling arm of Whitmore, his vows still sounding in her ear, that silent but never-failing monitor, Conscience, awoke, and at once presented the reverse of the fascinating picture

 that

that for a while had intoxicated her senses.—"Oh! my dear parents," exclaimed she, in an agony of grief, "must I then never see you more? the lost, the abandonded Emma has forsaken all, and for whom?—Great God! a married man! Oh! Mr. Whitmore, if you really love me, let me return; it will be the strongest proof of your affection, and never shall it be forgotten."

"Well, then," replied he, reproachfully, "let us return, for I cannot see you thus; I will resign myself, and wait the event of Darleville's wounds; at least, you shall not accuse *me*, Emma, of want of affection."

"Ah, no!" returned Emma, weeping, "let me return alone. Have I not shewn how dear I hold your safety?"

"And after such a proof, think you it is possible to tear myself from you? No, Emma, any thing else I may be able to accomplish; but, by all my hopes of happiness, we will not part! If you insist

sist, I will accompany you home, let life or death be the consequence."

Emma again became irresolute; again, for a while, love overcame reason. In the mean time the chaise proceeded swiftly, and momentarily made her return less possible—Whitmore alarming her feelings, and soothing her by turns, until at length they reached Dover; where, the wind proving fair, a packet was immediately procured, and all return entirely cut off for the lost Emma.

To divert her thoughts from dwelling on subjects he wished her to forget, Whitmore related the cause of his quarrel with Darleville: he had in the public coffee-room declared, that if Mrs. Delmer was not married to ensign Godwin, they had a perfect good understanding; as he was frequently with her at very unseasonable hours (information he had received from Mrs. Whitmore); as was also Mr. Whitmore *tête-à-tête* with Em-

ma. Whitmore on his entrance had been jested with on the business, and congratulated on his good fortune with the fair rustic; but not being naturally of a temper to hear the character of any one he professed to esteem treated lightly, he immediately took fire, and insisted on the author of the scandal being declared; which proving to be Darleville, he determined to quarrel; and walking up to him with assumed coldness, he said—"I hear, sir, you have taken the liberty to speak very freely this evening of my sister and Miss Godwin; I must therefore advise you in future to be more cautious, or your want of prudence may put your valour to the hazard—a circumstance that will perhaps prove inconvenient, as the *reality* of courage, as well as the reputation of gallantry, is necessary for a soldier." This affront, given in a coffee room, was too gross to let pass unnoticed; an appointment was therefore instantly made, after which Whitmore supped at Mrs.

Mrs. Delmer's, when he questioned her on her marriage, though he avoided particulars.

The next morning he met his opponent, whom, on the first fire, he shot in the side, and left with his friend, who had acted as second, while himself hastened to Emma, determined, as he had such a favourable pretence, to make a bold essay to get her into his power, and in which he unhappily succeeded. Such was the real state of the quarrel, and its subsequent consequences; but which were alternately heightened or softened on Whitmore's relation to Emma, as might best suit his purpose.

So great had been Emma's confusion, that she had not even thought of clothes; but Whitmore, on their arrival at Calais, soon removed that inconvenience; and they continued their route to Paris; where he supplied her with a profusion

and elegance that marked the power he supposed *show* to have over the female heart. Emma unfortunately was not insensible to it. In contemplating the splendour that surrounded her, her sorrow gradually decreased, and her gratitude for the donor augmented, until at length, in an hour of unguarded folly, she bartered her honour for the gaudy and useless trappings of pride and vice.

Mrs. Delmer, on her return home on the day of the duel, wondered at Emma's absence, or for what purpose she could have accompanied her brother; yet had no idea until late in the evening of the real truth.—She feared Edwin would blame her, and knew not what measures to pursue; but determined to give him immediate intelligence, and accordingly wrote that night; expressing her vexation at what had happened, and entreating his immediate return.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XVI.

While the unthinking Emma was flying from her friends, and sacrificing her honour to gratify the licentious wishes of her betrayer, all was joy and festivity at Inglewood. The young stranger was baptized by the name of Reuben, after his grandfather; and the subsequent entertainment having lasted until late on the second day, the guests had taken leave and returned home. Had it not been for the tormenting pangs of conscience, Edwin would have felt himself perfectly happy; for though he could sometimes forget every thing but love and Agnes, yet reflection was sure to return with redoubled violence. He was constant witness to the happiness of William and Fanny, and, like a fiend infernal,

nal; their innocent pleasures increased his torments, for in them he contemplated what himself might have possessed.

The venerable Godwin sometimes suspected that his son was not happy, but attributed it to his being necessitated to quit Agnes, and therefore wished their union to take place as soon as possible: it indeed gave him some surprise that Edwin himself did not press it more warmly; but waiting for the expected promotion was the reason given, and readily believed by Godwin; for his heart was too guileless of him to suppose his son a villain.

After the departure of the guests, as the family were sitting in cheerful conversation, the postboy's horn gave notice he brought letters, and a moment after, Margery entered and delivered one to Edwin, whose eye had, however, no sooner glanced over the direction (which was Mrs. Delmer's) than the blood for a moment forsook his cheeks, but as instantaneously

stantaneously again returned, and suffused them with crimson. Without knowing what he was about, he was instinctively going to put it in his pocket, had not his eyes met those of his brother William, in whose face he saw, in legible traits, the strongest marks of surprise.

This discovery at once recalled him to recollection; he endeavoured to conceal his confusion, and opened the letter; but had scarcely read two lines, when it again visibly increased; for it was Mrs. Delmer's first letter, in which she began by informing him that all restraint was now removed, and that their marriage might be declared, as she had obtained the promotion for him.

The joy Edwin experienced at this news in some measure overbalanced his confusion.—"I am preferred," exclaimed he in a rapture, "and have a prospect of yet further advancement." He then continued reading the remainder of his letter,

letter, which he had no sooner concluded than he put it in his pocket, simply relating what he thought necessary of the contents to his friends.

"And from whence comes it, Edwin?" said William, looking on him fixedly.

"Comes—why—why, from Mr. Whitmore, to be sure," replied Edwin, hesitating, and his downcast eye avoiding the scrutinizing gaze of his brother; "you know I long expected this event, yet it came so suddenly that it quite overcame me."

William, unwilling to make a reply that might awaken suspicion against his brother, and which, perhaps, in truth might be groundless, remained silent: while Edwin received the congratulations of the family, but particularly of Bernard, who now thought his hopes of Edwin's becoming a general half verified.

When Edwin had recovered his first surprise, he informed them he should be obliged

obliged to leave them almost immediately, as the business required his immediate presence.

"Pies on that luck!" interrupted Bernard, "I thought you would have staid to take Agnes with you; and though I should be sorry to lose her, yet, as you seem never happy apart, I am willing to consent when you please, on condition, however, that you let me have my girl with me two or three months every summer."

"Alas!" said Edwin, with a hypocritical sigh, "I would to Heaven I could now stay, or that I had known my advancement was so near; but it is in vain to wish, for I must inevitably depart either to-morrow night, or the morning following; yet there is one way, though I fear to propose it, if my beloved Agnes and our parents would consent."

"Consent! why to be sure we will," answered Bernard.

"It is," replied Edwin, hesitating; "if,

"if I might be permitted to take Agnes to town with me, we might there be married without delay. I have made Mr. Whitmore a sort of promise that he should be present at the ceremony; and as Emma is already there, she would have a female friend to accompany her."

It may be easily surmised that Edwin had no design to conduct Agnes to his sister; he simply wished to get her from her parents, as he had then no doubt but he should be able to deceive one so innocent of guile, and in a short time bring her to his wishes.

"My brother Godwin shall determine the business," returned Bernard.

"Then I by no means approve it," said Godwin. "Had Emma been here to accompany her, the objection might have been less; but even then the step would have been imprudent—what say you, William?"

"I am astonished that Edwin could ask it," replied William: "he surely did

did not consider the impropriety of Agnes's leaving the country with him unmarried. I think Fanny is, and ever was, as dear to me as her sister can be to Edwin, yet passion should never transport me so far as to suffer her to take a step that might subject her even to a temporary humiliation. Edwin surely can again get leave of absence; and, if Mr. Whitmore wishes to be present at the ceremony, he has nothing to detain him."

"I did not request your permission, nor yet your advice, William," said Edwin, with an emotion of anger which he could not conceal.

"The permission is alone in her father's power to grant," replied William. "As to my opinion, my father asked it; and it coinciding with his own, I freely gave it—nay, had it not, in this case I should not have scrupled to differ from him. Agnes has no brother but myself, and

and I hold her fame too dear to suffer it to be sullied, however unmeritedly."

"It is enough," cried Edwin; "if frustrating my happiness gives you pleasure, you have accomplished your end."

"Nay, nay," interrupted Bernard, "do not speak so harshly; William is a good lad; whatever he says is for the best. I do not know how it is, but he always brings me over to his opinion, and it is generally right."

"I am sorry, in this instance, that he has such power with you," replied Edwin, sulkily.

"And why so, my brother?" said William; "on calm reflection your own reason will applaud me; and now, to prove now dear I hold your happiness, I have a medium to propose: if you should find it inconvenient to return, prepare all for Agnes's reception, and Mr. Bernard and myself will accompany her to town. I think he would take such a journey

journey to oblige you; and I can assure you I would, though I should leave my heart at Inglewood with this witch and little sorcerer," patting his young son on the cheek as he lay at his mother's breast.

"There, there, now!" exclaimed Bernard, exultingly; "I told you he would bring you round; his is the best plan after all, though I do not much like your long journeys; however, for once I do not care. Come then, do not look so glum, all is settled; you know, if the mountain cannot come to us, why we must go to the mountain, as the folks say.

"I hope to spare you that trouble," replied Edwin, after a short pause, during which he endeavoured to collect himself; "I trust I shall be able to return. I certainly did not wish to be again separated from Agnes; but I must submit."

Mr. and Mrs. Godwin now declared themselves of William's opinion; as did also Fanny, who added—"Though, like

my

my father, I do not approve of long journeys, yet, in such a case as this, I shall willingly spare you."

The conversation now took a livelier turn with all but Edwin; his scheme frustrated of getting Agnes in his power, he knew not what measures to pursue; the intelligence of his promotion had been unexpected, and when the conditions annexed were reflected upon, unwelcome—to declare his marriage was to lose Agnes for ever. His uneasiness was too visible to be overlooked; all tried to enliven him, and particularly Agnes, by a thousand little artless caresses, endeavoured to make him forget his vexation; but in vain, the soothing of Agnes, like oil on a flame, served but to increase the distraction that overwhelmed him. At length the family retired to their apartments for the night, and, undisturbed by guilt or sorrow, the greater part soon fell asleep.

Edwin however felt he could not

rest;

rest; the attempt he knew would be fruitless, and for some time he sat in all the gloom of despair.—" Is it not possible to see Agnes again this night?" exclaimed he; " at least I shall take her unprepared; it is my last resource, and if I succeed, William and Virtue, I laugh at ye—I can hereafter make my own conditions; if otherwise, at all events, it can but hasten my departure a few hours from the Forest, of which I must take an everlasting farewell"

This resolution once formed, he determined to endeavour to accomplish it; and, leaving his own room, advanced towards that of Agnes with the cautious soft step of a night-robber. At the door he paused—a momentary pang of remorse seized him—" Monster!" said he, mentally, " what villany art thou about to perpetrate? Art thou not already sufficiently guilty? Thou wilt next be capable of murdering the innocent as they

they sleep, that neither their power nor persuasion should defeat thy purpose."

As he spoke, his feet involuntarily turned from the door—"And can I," resumed he, "give her up for ever?—Have I it not in my power to make her amends for this one deviation from rectitude? My fortune—my life—all—all are hers; then let me not weakly abandon an opportunity which can never be recalled."

With these ideas he determined to proceed in his purpose, and gently opening the door of her apartment, fearful of alarming her, lest she should awake the family, he said, in a soft voice—"Be not surprised, nor displeased, my beloved Agnes; I have a few words to say to you, which I wish to repeat without witness; for William, I see, is willing to protract my happiness as long as possible."

END OF VOL. I.

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